

# WABANAKI

## Cultural Tourism Plan



Prepared by  
International Institute  
of Tourism Studies  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



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## Foreword

**T**ourism has long been intertwined with the fabric of Indigenous communities, predating the arrival of early colonizers. Originally serving as a conduit for trade, commerce, and cultural exchange among tribes, it embodied principles of reciprocity and mutual learning. Today, the landscape of tourism has expanded into diverse forms, yet it often carries connotations of extractive practices and strains on destinations.

Recognizing tourism as a vital industry in Maine, this plan seeks to foster entrepreneurial ecosystems around cultural tourism within tribal communities while preserving traditional values. Tribal communities possess rich histories and stories that can catalyze economic opportunities, enhancing local economies while preserving cultural heritage.

This strategic plan emerges from a collaborative effort involving the Wabanaki Nations in Maine—the Mi'kmaq Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Pleasant Point), and the Penobscot Nation—along with community stakeholders, tourism educators, and professionals. Collectively, we are proud to present the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan, a strategic plan written to build a robust cultural tourism economy in the state of Maine.

Embedded within this plan are core values that prioritize economic growth alongside environmental stewardship, guided by community leadership and a commitment to cultural preservation. Central to our vision is the belief that sustainable tourism should benefit both visitors and residents alike, elevating quality of life and economic prosperity.

Through an inclusive planning process, community members have actively shaped this roadmap, translating aspirations into actionable steps. Their stories, lived experiences, and expertise have been integral in crafting this initiative, reflecting their dedication to stewarding homelands and culture.

We invite you to engage with this strategic framework and join us in nurturing a tourism industry that honors traditions, fosters economic resilience, and sustains vibrant communities.



**Matthew Lewis**  
**Executive Director, Four Directions**  
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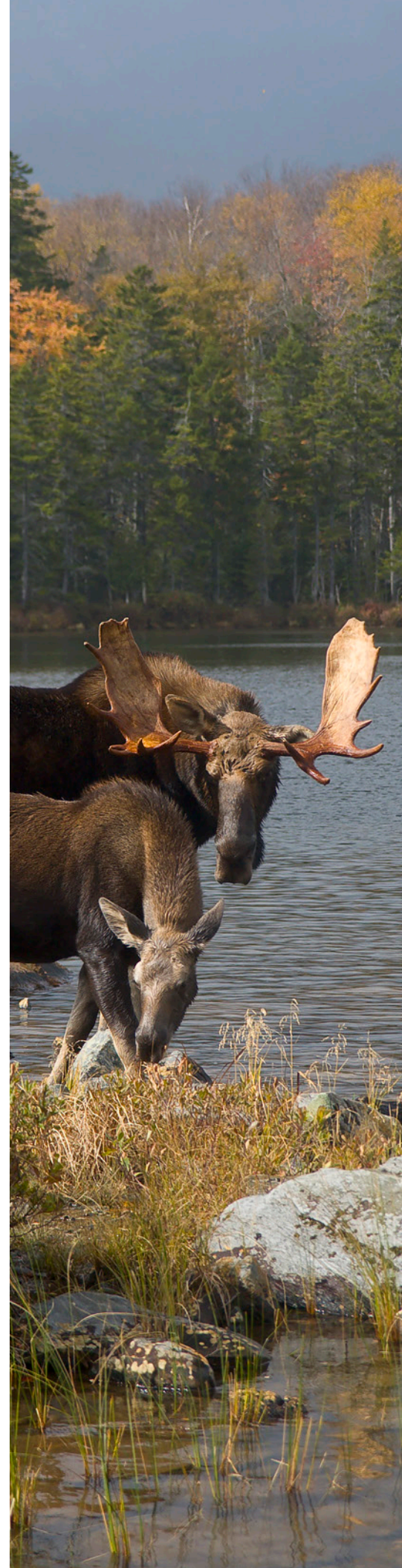
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## Completion

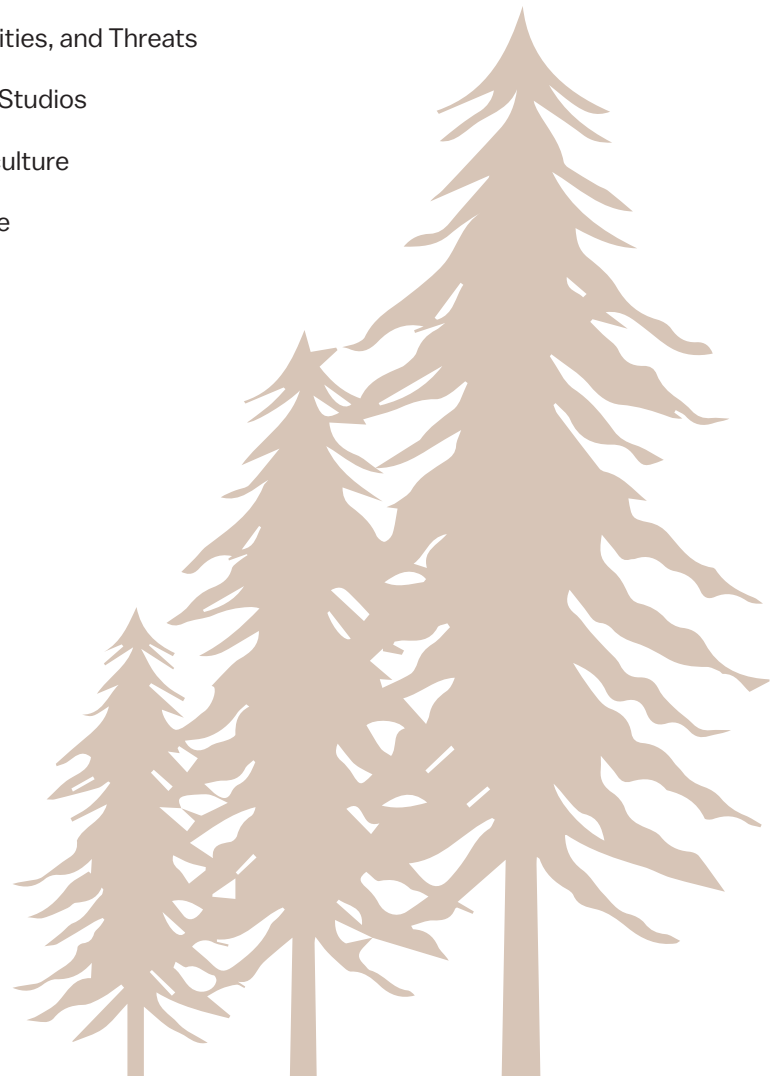
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Courtesy of Richard Seeley



## Acronyms

AIANTA	American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association
ANA	Administration for Native Americans
B&B	Bed and Breakfast
CDFI	Community Development Finance Institution
DMO	Destination Marketing and Management Organization
EDA	Economic Development Administration
FDDC	Four Directions Development Corporation
GW	George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies
MOT	Maine Office of Tourism, Film, and Outdoor Recreation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSTEs	Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprises
SAR	Situation Analysis Report
SCORE Maine	Service Corps of Retired Executives Maine
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TEDS	Tourism Experience Development Studios
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WCTI	Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative
WCTP	Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan
WTA	Wabanaki Tourism Alliance





# Executive Summary

## Executive Summary

For more than 12,000 years, the Wabanaki people—People of the Dawn or “First Light”—have lived in the Wabanakik (“Dawnland”) region, a beautiful expanse of forests and rugged coastline that encompasses present-day Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont in the United States and parts of southeastern Canada. Today, there are five Wabanaki communities in the area now known as Maine: the Mi’kmaq Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik (Pleasant Point), and the Penobscot Nation. Collectively, they are known as the Wabanaki Nations.<sup>1</sup> Each of these nations has a unique, vibrant culture and language with its own traditions.

Although tourism is a major industry in Maine—attracting approximately 15.6 million annual visitors and accounting for one in five jobs across the state<sup>2</sup>—the tourism industry and its economic impact remain small in Wabanaki communities. Wabanaki tourism is in its early stages, with each Wabanaki Nation at a different point in its development of tourism.

The Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan 2024–2029 (WCTP) serves as a strategic blueprint, providing direction and guidance for Wabanaki Nations and their Native and non-Native partner organizations to collaboratively and respectfully develop cultural tourism that benefits Wabanaki communities, entrepreneurs, and businesses while offering authentic and educational experiences to visitors.

The WCTP is the culmination of a two-year participatory planning process led and guided by the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative (WCTI) Leadership Team, which consists of Tribal Leaders from all five Wabanaki communities in Maine and staff from the Four

Directions Development Corporation (FDDC). Wabanaki community leaders, industry leaders, and partners gave generously of their time to support the development of the WCTP. More than 80 stakeholders from Wabanaki communities, the State of Maine, local and regional municipalities, tourism businesses, natural and cultural heritage organizations, and academic institutions participated in two in-person visioning and planning summits, ten focus groups/interviews, and six virtual work sessions; and over 200 Wabanaki community members participated in the 2023 Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Community Survey.

The shared vision among Wabanaki communities for advancement of cultural tourism is outlined below:

### Community Vision

**Wabanaki tourism flourishes with collaborative community leadership and participation, offering experiential and educational visitor experiences that honor, preserve, and protect the cultural assets and lands of the Wabanaki people while fostering economic growth, autonomy, and well-being.**



Courtesy of George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies

1 Four Directions. “About Four Directions: Wabanaki Tribes.” <https://fourdirectionsmaine.org/about-four-directions/wabanaki-tribes/>

2 “2021 Maine Tourism Highlights.” Maine Office of Tourism, April 2022. <https://motpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2021MaineTourismHighlights.pdf>

The WCTP supports the following Wabanaki community values.

### Community-Empowered Leadership

Successful Wabanaki tourism governance comes from representative, collaborative community leadership.

### Respect and Protection of Culture

The key to harmony and sustainability in a Wabanaki tourism ecosystem is respect for and protection of our cultural heritage.

### Education

Communication of Wabanaki history, challenges, values, and goals is critical to shaping visitor, resident, and industry attitudes and behaviors.

### Managed Growth

Tourism governance through intergenerational and intercommunity collaboration, guided by principles of responsible and sustainable growth, supports the long-term integrity of tourism assets.

### Environmental Stewardship

Preservation and regeneration of the natural environment is essential to maintaining a resilient visitor economy and is an important Wabanaki value.

The plan's six goals address critical challenges and capitalize on opportunities identified in this plan. The goals provide direction and purpose for 22 strategic initiatives to be implemented by Wabanaki communities and their partners.





Successful implementation of the 22 strategic initiatives outlined in this plan over the next five years is expected to bring about significant changes and achieve the following desired outcomes:

1. **Effective regional collaboration for advancement of cultural tourism**
2. **Enhanced support and local leadership for cultural tourism**
3. **Increased entrepreneurship and diverse Wabanaki cultural tourism experiences**
4. **Community-driven infrastructure and creative partnerships**
5. **Wabanaki brand development and promotion**

# Outcomes

The WCTP serves as a dynamic framework for collective action, and is designed to be adaptable to ever-changing local realities of Wabanaki communities. It is intended to be updated as a living document, ensuring its continued relevance and effectiveness in guiding the advancement of cultural tourism in Wabanaki communities.

Courtesy of Christina Kane-Gibson





# 1. Introduction

This section describes the plan's purpose and framework for use. It outlines our process and methodology to create the plan in collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders.

## Purpose of the Plan

The Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan 2024–2029 (WCTP) serves as a strategic blueprint, providing direction and guidance for Wabanaki Nations and their Native and non-Native partner organizations to collaboratively and respectfully develop cultural tourism that benefits Wabanaki communities, entrepreneurs, and businesses while offering authentic and educational experiences to visitors.

The WCTP presents a shared vision for the future of Wabanaki cultural tourism, establishes guiding tenets, and responds to the highest priority challenges related to the development, management, and promotion of Wabanaki cultural tourism. The plan also outlines strategic initiatives to guide collaboration and investment for well-managed and sustainable cultural tourism.

The ultimate aim of the WCTP is to create lasting, net-positive impact by ensuring tourism is a force for good in Wabanaki local economies. The plan is designed as a framework that will evolve to support Wabanaki leaders and organizations as they develop and manage tourism.

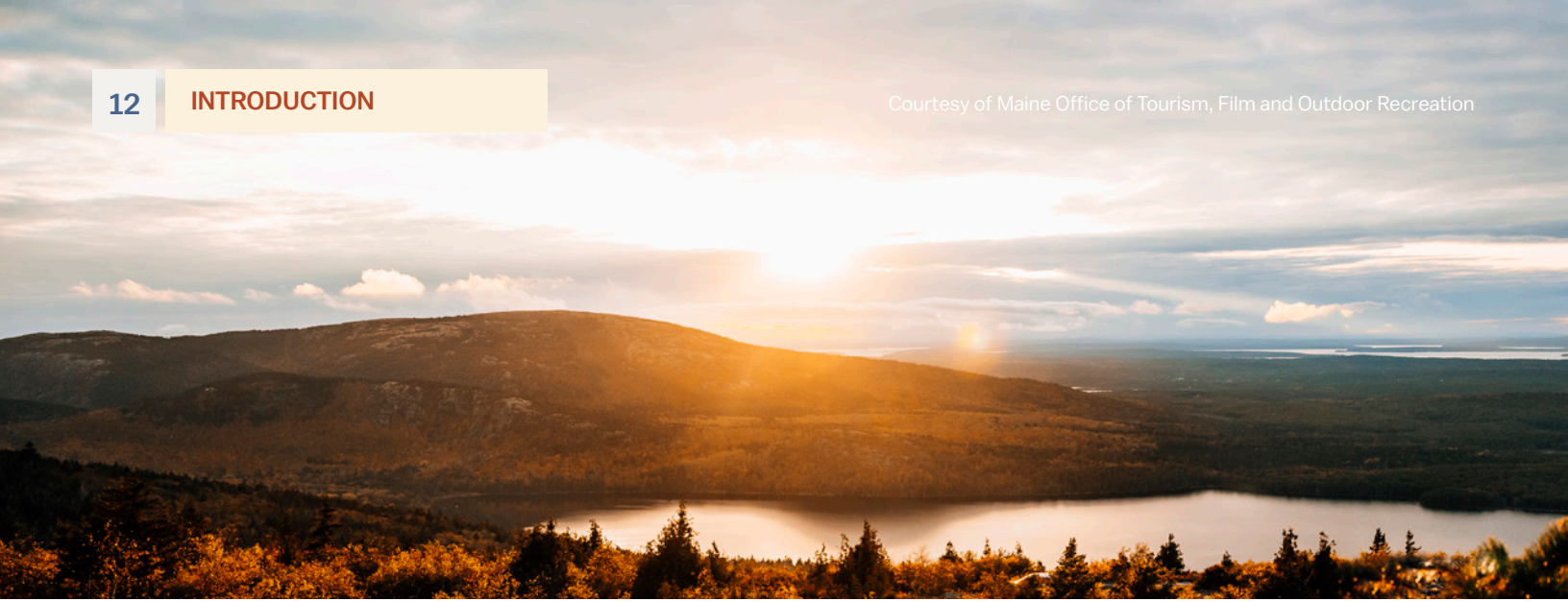
## Community and Stakeholder Involvement

Wabanaki community leaders, industry leaders, and partners gave generously of their time to support the development of the WCTP.

- Five leaders representing Wabanaki communities served on the WCTI Leadership Team, participating in regular meetings and work sessions over two years and guiding the development of the plan.
- Eighty-five stakeholders from Wabanaki communities, the State of Maine, local and regional municipalities, tourism businesses, natural and cultural heritage organizations, and academic institutions participated in two in-person visioning and planning summits, ten focus groups/interviews, and six virtual work sessions.
- Two hundred seventeen Wabanaki community members participated in the 2023 Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Community Survey.



Courtesy of Christina Kane-Gibson



## Process and Methodology

Wabanaki cultural tourism is in its early stages, with each Wabanaki Nation at a different point in its development of tourism. In the spring of 2022, the Wabanaki Nations came together to launch the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative (WCTI) to create an authentic inter-Tribal cultural tourism industry that draws visitors year-round and preserves Wabanaki cultures.<sup>3</sup> The Four Directions Development Corporation (FDDC), a nonprofit Native community development financial institution, leads the initiative with guidance from a WCTI Leadership Team composed of Tribal Leaders from all five Wabanaki communities in Maine. This effort is financially supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Office of Tourism, Film and Outdoor Recreation (MOT).

FDDC contracted the George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies (GW) in 2022 to facilitate a participatory process that aimed to assess the current state of tourism, develop a strategic plan, and build local capacity for tourism to grow and be managed sustainably.<sup>4</sup>

In partnership with the FDDC and GW, Wabanaki leaders and tourism industry stakeholders have completed four phases of work to produce the strategic plan:

### Phase 1 – Inventory of Existing Conditions

Desktop research to establish the place-based circumstances that are creating the situations.

To understand the current situation of Wabanaki tourism, GW conducted extensive research and worked with stakeholders to produce a comprehensive Situation Analysis Report (SAR). The SAR provides an overview of tourism resources in the five Wabanaki communities located in Maine, from both supply and demand perspectives. The analysis also examines key governance and enabling environmental considerations, and infrastructure, that are critical for tourism development. A summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) that emerged from the analysis is presented in Section 2 of this Plan.

### Phase 2 – On-Site Assessment

On-site stakeholder engagements (one-day summit, site visits, interviews, and focus groups) to validate situation analysis findings and fill information gaps.

The insights distilled in the SAR were then used to map priority challenges and opportunities. These priorities

<sup>3</sup> Tribal Business News. "Maine tribes receive \$374K to build Native tourism infrastructure." Tribal Business News, December 7, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <https://tribalbusinessnews.com/sections/tourism/13918-maine-tribes-receive-374k-to-build-native-tourism-infrastructure>

were presented to and discussed with Wabanaki community and tourism industry stakeholders during visioning and planning workshops, focus groups, and interviews in 2023 and the first quarter of 2024. During these engagements, stakeholders validated the priority challenges and opportunities that shaped the goals and strategic initiatives presented in this plan.

### Phase 3 – Participatory Visioning and Planning

On-site strategic planning workshops to create a collective vision and goals, prioritize issues and opportunities, and identify initiatives and resources to put the plan into action.

During in-person summits, stakeholders crafted a collective vision, values, and guiding principles to guide the direction and approach for the implementation of this plan and future Wabanaki tourism growth and management.

### Phase 4 – Plan Development and Validation

Creation and finalization of the strategic plan, to include an implementation plan consisting of goals and strategic initiatives that address priorities, issues, and opportunities and a proposed framework for implementation success through tourism governance.

With the vision, guiding principles, and a strategic list of priorities in hand, Wabanaki tourism leaders and industry stakeholders worked together to identify six goals and 22 strategic initiatives to advance over the next five years. For each strategic initiative, stakeholders helped to develop key objectives, priority actions, lead/partner organizations, potential resources, key performance indicators, and an implementation timeline.

The WCTI development process has provided Wabanaki Nations the opportunity to collectively shape a shared vision for the future of tourism.



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

## Plan Framework

The plan provides a strategic collective vision and framework for the future of Wabanaki tourism in Maine. The main components of the strategic framework are described below.





## 2. Current Situation

### **Where are we now?**

This section provides an overview of Wabanaki tourism and a high-level analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The full Situation Analysis Report is presented separately and serves as the foundation of the plan.



## Background

The first step of the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan development process involved a comprehensive analysis of the current status of Wabanaki tourism, from both supply and demand perspectives, in the five Wabanaki communities located in Maine. In addition, this analysis examined key governance and enabling environmental considerations, such as infrastructure, that are critical for developing tourism as a driver of economic development. The Situation Analysis Report (SAR) presents main findings together with a summary of findings distilled as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).

The SAR serves as the most comprehensive baseline assessment to date of Wabanaki tourism in Maine, and provides a foundation for Wabanaki Nations to craft a shared vision and a strategic framework for the development and management of tourism.

Let's take a closer look at the main takeaways from the SAR as well as a synthesis of the SWOT.

Although tourism is a major industry in Maine— attracting approximately 15.6 million annual visitors and accounting for one in five jobs across the state<sup>5</sup>—its growth and economic impact remain small in Wabanaki communities. There is an opportunity to respectfully and sustainably grow cultural tourism and tap into this steadily expanding industry.

Wabanaki cultural tourism is in its early stages, with each Wabanaki community at a different point in their development of tourism. While the Penobscot community has a cultural tourism program within its Cultural and Historic Preservation Department, other communities may have cultural tourism efforts that are not yet institutionalized.

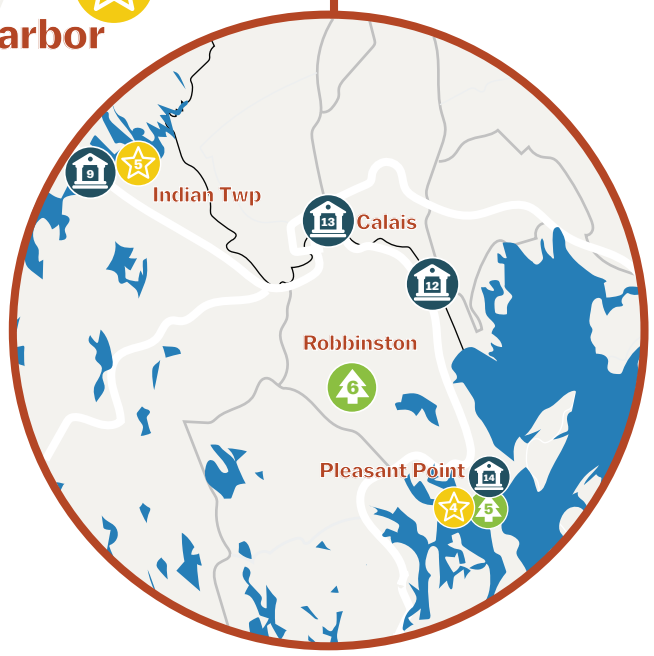
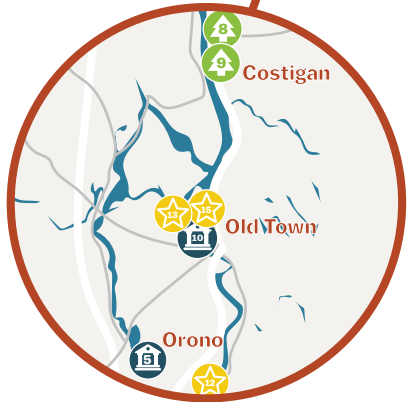
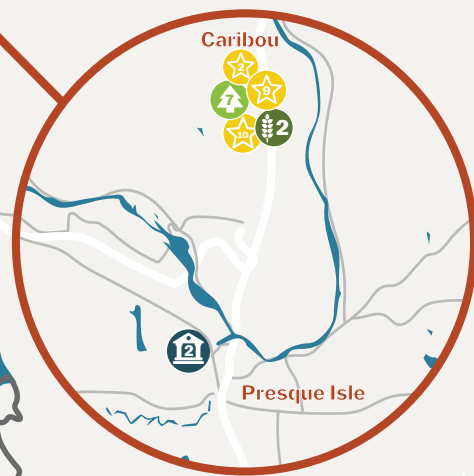
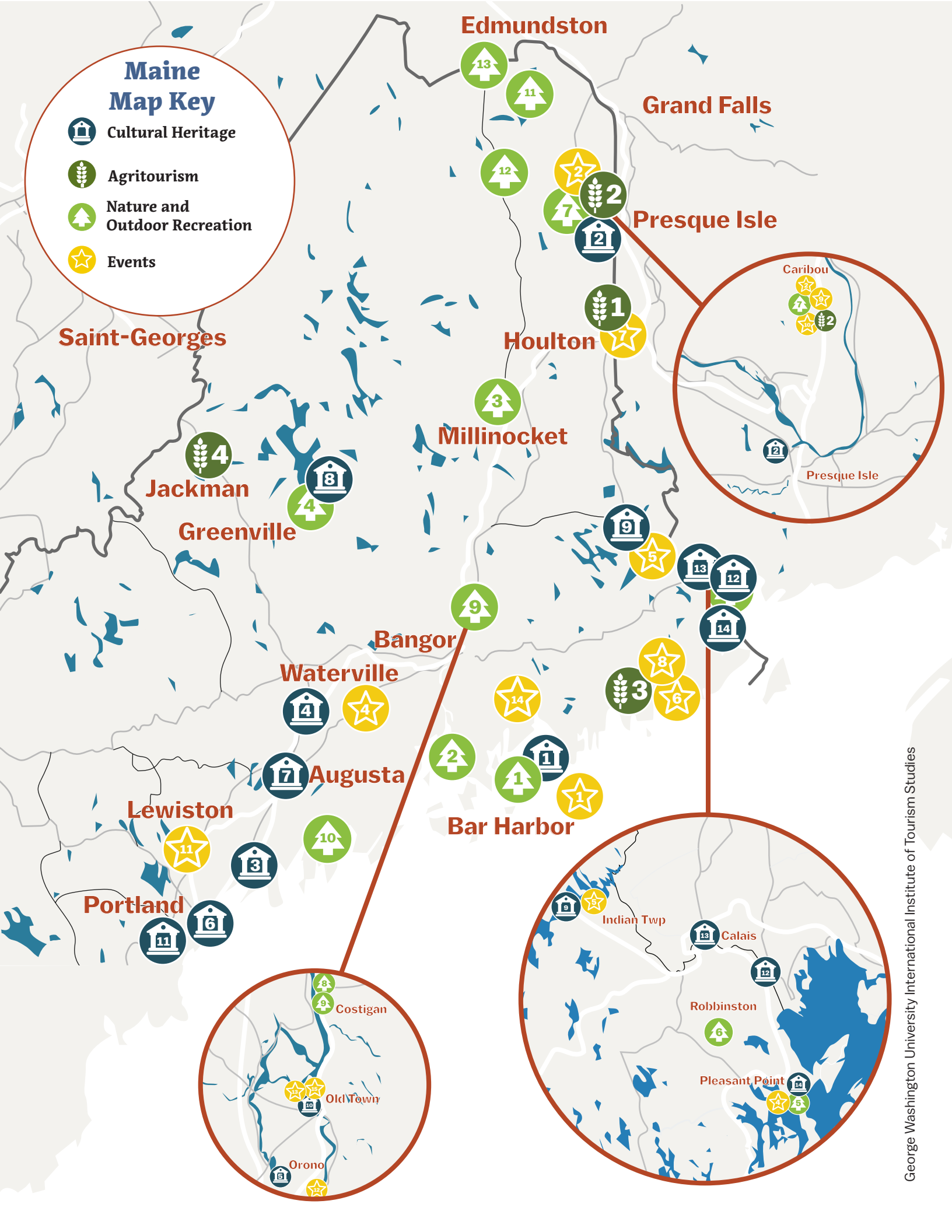
Today, there are diverse authentic tourism experiences being offered that range from cultural heritage tours at the Abbe Museum or Passamaquoddy Cultural Heritage Museum, to guided kayak tours along the Penobscot River, and cultural events such as the Annual Mawimi of Tribes. There are some Wabanaki-owned accommodations that include hunting and fishing lodges near accessible roadways along the coast and in the evergreen forests. Furthermore, highly skilled Wabanaki artisans produce beautiful works of art such as baskets, drums, carvings, canoes, and jewelry.

The following map showcases the diverse Wabanaki tourism assets, organized into four main categories: Cultural Heritage; Events, Culture, and Arts; Nature and Outdoor Recreation; and Agritourism.



# Maine Map Key

-  Cultural Heritage
-  Agritourism
-  Nature and Outdoor Recreation
-  Events



## Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Assets



### Cultural Heritage

- 1 Abbe Museum
- 2 Mi'kmaq Nation Museum
- 3 Bowdoin College Museum of Art
- 4 Colby College Museum of Art
- 5 Hudson Museum at the University of Maine
- 6 Maine Historical Society & Wadsworth-Longfellow House
- 7 Maine State Museum
- 8 Moosehead Cultural Heritage Center
- 9 Passamaquoddy Cultural Heritage Museum in Motahkomikuk
- 10 Penobscot Nation Museum
- 11 Portland Museum of Art
- 12 St. Croix Island
- 13 Wabanaki Cultural Center and Museum
- 14 Waponhaki Museum and Resource Center in Sipayik



### Events

- 1 Dawnland Festival of Arts & Ideas (formerly known as Abbe Museum Indian Market and Native American Festival & Basketmakers Market)
- 2 Bear Feast
- 3 Common Ground Country Fair
- 4 Passamaquoddy Days at Sipayik
- 5 Passamaquoddy Motahkomikuk Community Days
- 6 Machias Wild Blueberry Festival
- 7 Metaksonekiyak Community Day (Formerly Maliseet Recognition Day)
- 8 Margaretta Days Festival and Craft Fair
- 9 Mawiomi of Tribes
- 10 Mi'kmaq Farms Winter Market
- 11 Wabanaki Arts Market at Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village
- 12 Penobscot Nation Community Days
- 13 Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival
- 14 Wabanaki Spring Social
- 15 Wabanaki Winter Market



### Nature and Outdoor Recreation

- 1 Acadia National Park
- 2 Holbrook Island Sanctuary
- 3 Katahdin Woods & Water National Monument
- 4 Mount Kineo
- 5 Old Sow Whirlpool
- 6 Penknife Lakes
- 7 Spruce Haven
- 8 Sugar Island
- 9 Wabanaki Thoreau Trail
- 10 Whaleback Shell Midden State Historic Site
- 11 Fish River chain of lakes
- 12 Mi'kmaq tribal land that abuts the National Wildlife Refuge and International Trail System
- 13 Pine Tree Trail



### Agritourism

- 1 Southern Aroostook Agricultural Museum
- 2 Mi'kmaq Farms & Fish Hatchery
- 3 Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company
- 4 Passamaquoddy Maple Company

There is considerable support for the further development of cultural tourism within Wabanaki communities. In a Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Community Survey, conducted by FDDC in 2023, designed for tribal citizens, 57% of respondents indicated that they would like to see more visitors, and 70% agreed that tourism can positively impact the quality of life for residents if managed well.

When asked about the potential development of various visitor experiences, respondents felt it was important to create a wide variety of experiences. Eighty-six percent (86%) of survey respondents indicated that they favor developing more events and cultural experiences related to music and arts such as traditional music performances, Wabanaki language classes, beading and basket-making demonstrations and art shops. Other areas of opportunity identified include Wabanaki culinary and agritourism experiences such as Wabanaki meal experiences (78%) and community gardens (77%) and outdoor recreation activities such as hiking and camping outfitters (59%). Agritourism has great potential for existing farming and fishing businesses that produce and harvest traditional foods like blueberries, maple syrup, lobsters, and clams.

The WCTI and Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Plan reflect the Wabanaki Nations' recognition of the shared challenges in advancing cultural tourism and the many benefits of collaborating to develop and implement a regional strategy for Wabanaki cultural tourism.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

### Strengths

A thorough review of the current situation reveals key strengths for Wabanaki cultural tourism.

#### Tourism Product

- Diverse attractions and events with a strong cultural heritage offering: There are 46 Wabanaki attractions, sites, and events offering diverse experiences across all Wabanaki Nations; 68% of these are events or cultural heritage attractions.
- Majority of tourism attractions, sites, and events are visitor-ready: Market readiness varies across attractions, sites, and events assessed, with the majority (63%) ranging from visitor-ready to market-ready.
- Wabanaki cultures are frequently showcased: Just over 50% of attractions, sites, and events assessed exclusively showcase Wabanaki cultures.
- Reliable accommodations support for Wabanaki tourism: There are accommodation options available near most attractions, and Wabanaki communities are developing many new types of accommodations.
- High ratings for attractions and sites: Wabanaki attractions and sites have very positive Google ratings, averaging 4.6 out of 5.0.



## Tourism Demand and Economic Impacts

- Strong tourism demand: Maine welcomed nearly 15.4 million visitors in 2022, demonstrating a strong rebound in tourism from the pandemic.
- Tourism generates jobs, revenue, and household earnings: Tourism is a critical economic driver in Maine, accounting for roughly one out of every five jobs in the state. It generates \$1.1 billion in taxes and contributes nearly \$5.1 billion in household earnings.
- High visitor satisfaction reflects Maine's appeal: Visitor satisfaction is remarkably high, with 98% of tourists reporting they are pleased with their trip to Maine.

## Enabling Environment for Tourism

- Local advocates for Wabanaki tourism: A core network of 20 individuals from Wabanaki Nations, the State of Maine, and the tourism industry are actively involved in advancing Wabanaki tourism.
- Key public entities in tribal governments can support tourism development: Tribal governments have key public entities that are linked to nature-based and cultural tourism, including natural resources/environmental departments, economic development departments (in four communities), and historic preservation offices.
- Educational programs support tourism and hospitality management: The University of Maine System, the Maine Community College System, and Husson University all offer programs dedicated to tourism, hospitality, and outdoor recreation. The University of Maine System provides a Native American Waiver and Educational Program for members of federally recognized tribes.

## Weaknesses and Threats

Cultural tourism development in Wabanaki Nations faces diverse weaknesses and threats.

### Tourism Product

- Wabanaki cultural attractions market readiness levels have declined: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, overall market-readiness levels declined for the 25 attractions and events predominantly centered on Wabanaki cultures, traditions, and heritage. More attractions and events fall into the visitor-ready, in-development, and potential asset stages, with no asset reaching the export-ready stage.
- Limited online presence restricts reach of Wabanaki attractions and events: Many Wabanaki attractions and events either have no online presence or are hosting their visitor information only on Facebook, which limits reach to visitor markets.
- Limited availability of online information on Wabanaki tourism offerings: Both consistency and quality of online information about Wabanaki attractions and experiences are insufficient; there is no centralized online location for Wabanaki tourism information.
- Scarcity of Wabanaki-owned culinary experiences: There are few Wabanaki-owned restaurants or traditional Wabanaki culinary experiences.
- Nature and outdoor recreation attractions lack Wabanaki cultural integration: Many nature and outdoor recreation assets lack meaningful connections to Wabanaki communities, history, or culture.
- Inadequate signage: There is a lack of wayfinding, directional, and interpretive signage for Wabanaki attractions.

## Tourism Demand and Economic Impact

- Lack of data on Wabanaki tourism: There is no data on visitation or economic impact specifically for Wabanaki tourism in Maine.
- Workforce shortage negatively impacts visitor experiences in Maine: The lack of workforce in recent years is negatively impacting one in six visitor experiences in Maine, most notably in restaurants and in customer service ratings in general.

## Enabling Environment for Tourism

- Wabanaki nations lack tourism offices: Wabanaki Nations lack specific departments dedicated to the planning, development, promotion, and management of tourism. The Penobscot Nation conducts cultural tourism activities through their Cultural and Historic Preservation Department.
- Absence of tourism management or marketing plan for Wabanaki tourism: There is no tourism management or marketing plan for Wabanaki tourism
- Limited workforce capacity and resources for Wabanaki tourism development: Wabanaki communities have limited workforce capacity or resources (funding, land) available to dedicate to advancing tourism.
- Tribal leadership changes disrupt tourism prioritization: Tribal leadership changes frequently, which can disrupt prioritization of tourism and momentum for tourism projects.
- Lack of local lodging taxes limits tourism-specific funding: While the State of Maine levies a 9% lodging tax on stays of less than 28 days in hotels, rentals, and trailer camps, there are no city or county lodging taxes and no legal authority for local municipalities to tax lodging. This rules out the possibility of using lodging tax as a stable source of funding for tourism development and marketing, which is the case in most destinations.
- Low ranking for ease of doing business: Maine ranks 44th out of the 50 states for overall ease of doing business. It scores particularly low in business costs and in the regulatory environment associated with starting and operating a business.

## Our Journey Forward

Wabanaki communities and their partners have an opportunity to build on key strengths and address weaknesses and threats outlined above. There are many key opportunities to make positive, supportive changes:

- Encourage visitors to spend some of their 4–5 nights in Maine at Wabanaki-owned attractions, sites, facilities, and events.
- Elevate the market readiness of Wabanaki cultural tourism attractions and events.
- Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in developing new Wabanaki tourism attractions and experiences, especially in outdoor recreation, agritourism, and culinary experiences.
- Provide training and professional development opportunities for a hospitality and tourism workforce.
- Create a centralized online location for all Wabanaki tourism, visitor, and industry information.
- Develop a Wabanaki Tourism brand identity and marketing strategy with community input and target market research.
- Create guidelines for Wabanaki tourism business, visitor etiquette guidelines for visitors, and cultural sensitivity training programs for the tourism industry.
- Create a regional tourism governance structure to support the development and management of Wabanaki tourism.
- Conduct education and outreach about tourism within Wabanaki communities (including with youth and elders) and among Tribal Leaders.
- Improve wayfinding, directional signage, and interpretive installations at Wabanaki attractions.
- Develop systems for data collection, monitoring, and reporting to understand the demand for Wabanaki tourism and its economic impact.



## 3. Strategy

### *Where do we want to go from here?*

This section presents the five-year strategic framework for development of cultural tourism by Wabanaki Nation communities. It outlines the vision, expected outcomes, values, guiding principles, goals, strategic initiatives, and metrics for success.



The strategic framework of the plan begins with a collaborative vision for the future of tourism in Wabanaki Nations. This vision was crafted through a collective prioritization of values and guiding principles by stakeholders engaged in the plan's development. These values and guiding principles form the foundation of the WCTP's goals, priority initiatives, and anticipated outcomes.

## Community Vision

**Wabanaki tourism flourishes with collaborative community leadership and participation, offering experiential and educational visitor experiences that honor, preserve, and protect the cultural assets and lands of the Wabanaki people while fostering economic growth, autonomy, and well-being.**

## Values and Guiding Principles

Core values and guiding principles are a set of agreed-upon approaches, practices, and behaviors integral to the plan and its implementation. These values and principles are shaped by Wabanaki tourism and community leaders and are embedded in all key elements of the plan as well as the plan's design process, guiding future decision-making and actions.

Core Values	Guiding Principles
<p><b>Community-Empowered Leadership</b> Successful Wabanaki tourism governance comes from representative, collaborative community leadership.</p>	<p>Wabanaki tourism planning and development is led by Wabanaki citizens who represent their communities.</p> <p>We engage, respect, and value all voices. We foster youth and elder participation and collaboration. We cooperate with each other and collaborate with other communities.</p>
<p><b>Respect and Protection of Culture</b> The key to harmony and sustainability in a Wabanaki tourism ecosystem is respect for and protection of our cultural heritage.</p>	<p>We acknowledge the individuality of our communities while supporting a cohesive and unified Wabanaki tourism ecosystem.</p> <p>We foster respect, promote harmony, and acknowledge individual distinctions between Wabanaki communities and between those communities and other communities in Maine.</p> <p>We preserve and enforce the preservation of Wabanaki cultures, sacred sites, and knowledge.</p>

Core Values	Guiding Principles
<p><b>Education</b></p> <p>Communication of Wabanaki history, challenges, values, and goals is critical to shaping visitor, resident, and industry attitudes and behaviors.</p>	<p>We effectively communicate our sovereignty and our high Wabanaki visitor standards and expectations to stem stereotyping and influence visitor behavior and industry impacts.</p> <p>We share our knowledge and traditions with our youth.</p>
<p><b>Managed Growth</b></p> <p>Tourism governance through intergenerational and intercommunity collaboration, guided by principles of responsible and sustainable growth, supports the long-term integrity of tourism assets.</p>	<p>We support consistent, sustainable visitor policies as well as individual community growth policies.</p> <p>We are committed to the creation and expansion of cultural experiences that match community expectations, resources, and capacity.</p>
<p><b>Environmental Stewardship</b></p> <p>Preservation and regeneration of the natural environment is essential in maintaining a resilient visitor economy and is an important Wabanaki value.</p>	<p>We honor, protect, and support stewardship of Wabanaki land, water, and animals.</p> <p>We nurture traditional Native values of environmental interconnection and sacredness through community engagement; we work with partners who champion stewardship of the environment.</p>





## Goals

The plan's six goals provide direction and purpose for the strategic initiatives and priority actions to be implemented by stakeholders and partners. Goals play a crucial role in shaping the decisions and activities that will be undertaken to realize desired outcomes.



## Strategic Initiatives

The plan contains 22 strategic initiatives that present the collective actions needed to meet the plan’s goals. For each strategic initiative, the implementation plan outlines recommended key objectives, priority actions, partner organizations, potential resources, key performance indicators, and an implementation timeline.

Goals	Strategic Initiatives
 <p><b>Goal 1</b> Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation.</p>	<p>1.1 Establish a regional learning-action network to facilitate collaborative development and management of tourism.</p> <p>1.2 Build local capacity for tourism within the Wabanaki Nations.</p> <p>1.3 Develop a tourism monitoring system to track tourism activities and their impacts in Wabanaki Nations.</p> <p>1.4 Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable advancement of cultural tourism.</p>
 <p><b>Goal 2</b> Foster community engagement and support for Wabanaki tourism.</p>	<p>2.1 Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations.</p> <p>2.2 Enhance tribal councils’ understanding of and collaboration on tourism initiatives.</p> <p>2.3 Offer educational programs about Wabanaki Nations and their tourism efforts to tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine.</p>
 <p><b>Goal 3</b> Support entrepreneurship and the market readiness of tourism businesses.</p>	<p>3.1 Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses.</p> <p>3.2 Develop and implement standards for Wabanaki tourism operators.</p> <p>3.3 Equip Wabanaki tourism operators with the skills to engage effectively with the travel trade for sales and marketing purposes.</p>
 <p><b>Goal 4</b> Create and deliver Wabanaki cultural experiences.</p>	<p>4.1 Train entrepreneurs to develop cultural tourism experiences.</p> <p>4.2 Increase the number of trained and certified Wabanaki tour guides.</p> <p>4.3 Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines.</p> <p>4.4 Develop Wabanaki cultural tour itineraries along travel routes.</p>
 <p><b>Goal 5</b> Enhance wayfinding and placemaking.</p>	<p>5.1 Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources.</p> <p>5.2 Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions.</p> <p>5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options.</p> <p>5.4 Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions.</p>
 <p><b>Goal 6</b> Develop a Wabanaki Tourism brand and increase awareness of Wabanaki experiences and events.</p>	<p>6.1 Develop a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and marketing strategy.</p> <p>6.2 Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide.</p> <p>6.3 Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism.</p> <p>6.4 Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members.</p>

## Desired Outcomes and Metrics

This WCTP addresses critical challenges for advancing cultural tourism and outlines 22 strategic initiatives. Over the next five years, we anticipate significant changes in key areas outlined below. The overarching desired outcomes will undergo review, and a final framework of indicators and performance measures will be established during year-one activities.

### Outcome 1: Effective regional collaboration for advancement of cultural tourism

The Wabanaki Nations agree to establish a new collaborative structure, the Wabanaki Tourism Alliance (WTA), through which Wabanaki communities and their partners share responsibility for implementation of the 22 strategic initiatives presented in this WCTP. The WTA evolves into a Wabanaki tourism management and marketing organization.

### Outcome 2: Enhanced support and local leadership for cultural tourism

Wabanaki Nations successfully increase local capacity for tourism leadership, possibly leading to the establishment of tourism programs or offices in some communities. Cultural tourism fellows and Wabanaki tourism ambassadors cultivate widespread support for and participation in cultural tourism efforts within Wabanaki communities. Tribal council members actively support regional collaboration and implementation of the WCTP. Additionally, tourism operators and frontline tourism employees are more informed about Wabanaki communities and their cultural tourism offerings and serve as ambassadors, encouraging tourists to visit Wabanaki communities.

### Outcome 3: Increased entrepreneurship and diverse Wabanaki cultural tourism experiences

There is a significant increase in the number of Wabanaki entrepreneurs and businesses capitalizing on opportunities in the tourism value chain, and those businesses see substantial growth due to increased visitation and successful marketing and promotion. Communities and entrepreneurs use training, technical assistance, and resources to design, promote, and operate a diverse array of new tourism experiences. Standards for Wabanaki tourism providers are developed, and Wabanaki businesses strive to meet these standards, leading to a higher percentage of market- or export-ready businesses. Collaboration with the travel trade for tourism promotion becomes more prevalent. Cultural tourism visitor etiquette guidelines are developed and used by destination organizations, tour operators, and Wabanaki communities. Visitor satisfaction is reflected in positive reviews, high ratings, and increased repeat visitation.

### Outcome 4: Community-driven infrastructure and creative partnerships

Wabanaki communities actively participate in shaping the design and focus of infrastructure investments for cultural tourism, resulting in positive feedback on the quality of new wayfinding and placekeeping infrastructure. Strong public-private-community partnerships are established and strengthened between Wabanaki Nations and industry, state, and federal partners to fund and implement infrastructure and placemaking projects.

### Outcome 5: Wabanaki brand development and promotion

Wabanaki communities actively participate in developing a tourism destination brand identity that reflects their values, culture, traditions, and heritage. This brand is integrated into the Visit Maine website and marketing campaigns. The brand design elements and their use in digital and print resources receive positive feedback from Wabanaki communities and visitors.





## 4. Action Plan

### How do we get there?

This section outlines 22 strategic initiatives to achieve the six goals of the plan. Action plan details are presented for each proposed initiative and include objectives, priority actions, potential resources, partner organizations, and key performance indicators. The implementation timeline presents a suggested time frame for initial actions to begin across three segments: short-term (year 1), medium-term (years 2–3), and long-term (years 4–5).



## Goal 1

### Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation

#### Strategic Initiatives

- 1.1 Establish a regional learning-action network to facilitate collaborative development and management of tourism.
- 1.2 Build local capacity for tourism within the Wabanaki Nations.
- 1.3 Develop a tourism monitoring system to track tourism activities and their impacts in Wabanaki Nations.
- 1.4 Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable advancement of cultural tourism.

Currently, tourism is in its early stages within Wabanaki Nations; while there are no established tourism programs or offices in the five Wabanaki communities, the Penobscot Nation conducts cultural tourism activities through their Cultural and Historic Preservation Department. Tribal and community leaders of the Wabanaki Nations will need to collaborate to grow and nurture cultural tourism. There is significant value in pooling resources and working collaboratively to implement cultural tourism initiatives.

Ad hoc Native American tourism networks such as the South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance have taken shape in the Great Plains and can serve as a model for the type of collaborative management that is needed to guide advancement of tourism in Wabanaki Nations and most importantly to implement the WCTP. A Wabanaki tourism network can facilitate structured governance—a mechanism for coordinating, cooperating, and collaborating—to effectively advance tourism and monitor and manage its impacts on Wabanaki communities and cultural and natural resources. Furthermore, the Wabanaki tourism network can connect the Tribal Nations with industry leaders and the local, state, and federal partners needed to develop cultural tourism as a catalyst for economic growth in Wabanaki communities. It is important to recognize that for a Wabanaki tourism network to be viable, the time and effort of Wabanaki leaders and communities must be financially supported. Additionally, a Wabanaki

tourism network's efforts and projects should include ensuring the protection of the intellectual property rights of Wabanaki communities and entrepreneurs.

Over time, the ad hoc tourism network can evolve into a formal destination marketing and management organization (DMO). DMOs are the backbone of tourism destinations, both on the domestic front in the United States and globally. Effective DMOs and destination managers are pivotal in local tourism management. Their responsibilities include attracting tourists, supporting local businesses, and promoting the destination through positioning statements, branding campaigns, and high-quality product development. DMOs engage in effective communication with stakeholders, including residents, and optimize financial resources from both public and private sectors to ensure value for money spent on projects aligned with overall objectives.



The foundational initiatives encompassed within this goal underpin all other goals in our pursuit of sustainable advancement of cultural tourism in Wabanaki Nations.

## Measuring Success

Success will be measured in four ways:

1. An ad hoc regional network for collaborative management and implementation of the WCTP is established and operates successfully.
2. Relevant tourism impact indicators (economic, social, and environmental) are identified and tracked and a report is published every year or every two years.
3. Wabanaki Nations successfully increase local capacity for tourism leadership, leading to the establishment of tourism programs or offices in some communities.
4. A regional destination management and marketing organization is established.

Together, the Wabanaki Nations will forge a path to harness tourism for the betterment of communities, bolstering local entrepreneurs and enterprises, honoring and cherishing Wabanaki cultures, and preserving nature and heritage for generations to come.

## 1.1 Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation

To realize the shared vision and goals articulated in this WCTP, the Wabanaki Nations will need to establish both short-term and long-term collaborative management structures. An interim ad hoc learning-action network for the collaborative advancement of cultural tourism, referred to as the Wabanaki Tourism Alliance (WTA), is proposed to bridge the gap between the current situation and a future permanent structure, sustaining the momentum generated by the WCTP's inclusive planning process.

The interim WTA will be comprised of leaders from the Wabanaki Nations and key individuals and organizations essential to WCTP implementation, leveraging the foundation laid by the existing WCTI Leadership Team. This structure aims to enlist the diverse expertise and resources needed to expedite decision-making and implementation of Year 1 priority initiatives outlined in the WCTP.

While the WTA will function as an experimental platform for building trust, coordination, and collective action, it is crucial not to become complacent with this short-term solution. The interim network must develop a clear roadmap for transitioning to a permanent governance structure for collaborative destination management and marketing.



## Initiative 1.1: Establish a regional learning-action network to facilitate collaborative development and management of tourism

### Implementation Timeline: Year 1 (Short-Term)

#### Objective

1. Establish an interim structure for collaborative tourism development to maintain momentum and cultivate a collective sense of shared responsibility for WCTP implementation.

#### Priority Actions

##### 1.1.1 Design network structure and scope of work for the WTA.

WTA Design Recommendations:

- The WCTI Leadership Team will select one of its members to co-convene and co-chair the network alongside a representative from FDDC.
- A network manager (contractor) will oversee operational tasks.
- An executive group of select organizations from the wider network will facilitate efficient decision-making.
- WTA member organizations will be divided into action teams focused on quick-win priority actions, with members having the option to join multiple teams as needed.

Primary roles and responsibilities of the WTA will include:

- Guiding implementation activities and monitoring progress of the WCTP in the short term.
- Supporting collective action through involvement in action teams and quick-win projects.
- Maintaining ongoing communication with key stakeholder groups, in particular Wabanaki communities, about progress on the WCTP.
- Facilitating activities to promote trust, knowledge sharing, and learning among participating organizations within the network.
- Promoting engagement and participation from additional organizations as required to enhance network effectiveness.
- Maintaining accountability to tourism stakeholders and the wider community for WCTP implementation.

##### 1.1.2 Establish the WTA, leveraging the foundation laid by the existing WCTI Leadership Team.

- The WCTP development process has involved a wide range of stakeholders that are needed for the successful development of cultural tourism in the Wabanaki Nations. Initially, the WTA can be formed by expanding the WCTI Leadership Team, which includes leaders from all Wabanaki Nations, to include representatives of organizations from stakeholder groups needed for successful implementation of Year 1 activities.
- Allocate funding for a consultant to oversee the management of the WTA.
- For the WTA to be viable, the time and effort of Wabanaki leaders and communities must be financially supported. Additionally, the WTA should ensure that the intellectual property rights of Wabanaki communities and entrepreneurs are safeguarded as part of the network's efforts and projects.
- Aim to time the interim structure launch and the announcement of a contract with a network manager to coincide with key WCTP dissemination activities.

##### 1.1.3 Choose 2–3 quick-win WCTP priority actions for Year 1 implementation, with the potential for repetition throughout the lifespan of the WTA.

- Collaborate with WTA organizations to secure funding for Year 1 priority actions.
- Organize WTA members into action teams based on agreed quick-win priority actions, allowing network members to join one or more teams. The WCTP outlines suggested quick-win priority actions for Year 1

## Initiative 1.1: Establish a regional learning-action network to facilitate collaborative development and management of tourism

### Implementation Partners

FDDC, Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Initiative Leadership Team, MOT, and other key organizations that participated in WCTP development

### Resources

- Resources needed to recruit and contract a network manager
- Resources need to cover the time and effort of Wabanaki leaders involved in the WTA

### Key Performance Indicators

- Functioning WTA that has representation from all key stakeholder groups needed to implement Year 1 quick-win projects
- Two to three quick-win WCTP priority actions implemented in Year 1

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance](#): An ad hoc network for collaborative tourism development and management
- North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance: an independent regional destination organization for all federally recognized tribes in North Dakota that started as an ad hoc network



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

## 1.2 Build local capacity for tourism development within the Wabanaki Nations

Building local capacity at the tribal level is essential for sustainable tourism development and management. As time progresses, communities may find it necessary to allocate resources specifically to tourism by hiring a tourism director and establishing a dedicated tourism office. Currently, none of the Wabanaki Nations have official tourism offices or programs in place. With exception to the Penobscot Nation's Cultural and Historic Preservation Department, that conducts cultural tourism activities.

Initiating a capacity-building program in cultural tourism development and management for Wabanaki leaders will be an important first step. This step, coupled with the development and rollout of a comprehensive toolkit for local tourism development encompassing diverse models and recommendations for establishing and sustaining a tourism office, could significantly aid Wabanaki Nations in assessing feasibility and setting up their own tourism offices.



## Initiative 1.2: Build local capacity for tourism development within the Wabanaki Nations

### Implementation Timeline: Years 1–5 (Short- to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Train community leaders in cultural tourism development and management.
2. Provide guidance and support for establishing tourism offices in Tribal Nations.

#### Priority Actions

**1.2.1** Create a tourism leadership capacity-building program focused on training community fellows from each Wabanaki Nation in tourism development and management. These cultural tourism fellows will complete professional development courses in cultural tourism and attend Native American tourism conferences in the United States and Canada to build a network of contacts and support. This comprehensive approach will empower them to effectively lead tourism initiatives in their respective communities. The cultural tourism fellows can play a vital role in supporting the active engagement of Wabanaki Nations in the implementation of this plan.

**1.2.2** Community fellows will act as “train-the-trainer” facilitators, engaging community leaders from Wabanaki Nations in the fundamentals of cultural tourism and practical skills, such as developing and pricing tourism experiences, which are crucial for plan implementation. They will also work to organize and/or facilitate tourism capacity-building sessions and peer-to-peer exchange opportunities between Wabanaki community leaders and Native American tourism leaders from the U.S. and beyond. These activities will help build local capacity within an extended network of Wabanaki community leaders, including youth.

**1.2.3** Another critical component of building capacity involves providing coaching and mentorship to cultural tourism fellows on a bi-monthly or quarterly basis during the first year of their work. This can include scheduled interactions with tourism practitioners in tribal nations throughout the U.S. Furthermore, semiannual meet-ups of all fellows should be considered to ensure that they are supported as they help to establish trust and initiate new tourism activities in Wabanaki communities.

**1.2.4** Develop a comprehensive toolkit to aid Wabanaki Nations in assessing feasibility and determining sustainable pathways for establishing tourism offices or programs.

The first step of this toolkit involves assessing place-based circumstances unique to each community, highlighting critical factors and barriers related to tourism governance. Key considerations include the enabling environment for tourism, political will, and local capacity.

The second step entails developing feasible tourism governance models and implementation pathways specifically tailored to the realities of Wabanaki Nations. These governance models should include the following:

- Purpose to be defined based on the community’s needs and aspirations
- Main functions
- Organizational structure
- Operational model
- Funding strategies
- Partnerships

It’s crucial that these governance models be developed through a participatory planning process to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, the toolkit will feature good practice guidelines used by Indigenous groups globally to develop effective tourism governance models.

#### Implementation Partners

FDDC, Wabanaki Tribal Councils, MOT, training partners

#### Resources

- Grant funding: Administration for Native Americans (ANA), Office of Indian Economic Development – Bureau of Indian Affairs, Economic Development Administration (EDA)
- Training partners such as American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) and other academic institutions

## Initiative 1.2: Build local capacity for tourism development within the Wabanaki Nations

### Key Performance Indicators

- Cultural tourism fellows hired and working in Wabanaki communities
- Tourism governance models for Wabanaki Nations toolkit developed and rolled out



Courtesy of George Washington University International Institute of Tourism Studies

### 1.3 Develop a tourism monitoring system to track tourism activities and their impacts in Wabanaki Nations

Consistently monitoring fundamental indicators that illuminate the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism can offer valuable insights for Wabanaki decision-making, forecasting, and resource allocation. However, given the nascent stage of tourism in Wabanaki Nations across Maine, there is limited availability of data on common indicators like visitor arrivals. It's crucial, therefore, to begin tracking key metrics. Design of a tourism monitoring system should be led by Wabanaki community leaders. The MOT can be an important resource and partner since they already collect and report on tourism data on an ongoing basis. Furthermore, data collection within Wabanaki Nations will need to be organized in collaboration with and with the approval of Wabanaki Nations' research boards.

## Initiative 1.3: Develop a tourism monitoring system to track tourism activities and their impacts in Wabanaki Nations

### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–5 (Medium- to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Establish an accessible data bank that is regularly updated.
2. Track and report on the holistic impacts of tourism in Wabanaki communities and on cultural and natural assets.

#### Priority Actions

**1.3.1** Identify a set of core indicators to track. This can be done by establishing an action team within the WTA (see Priority Initiative 1.1) to assess what data exists and identify gaps. The Situation Analysis Report produced as part of this plan can be used as a definitive guide for this first step since it provides baseline data on a wide range of indicators. Some suggested core indicators are outlined below:

- Quality of local economy and work – tourism demand (e.g., visitation/visitor trends, overnight visitors: room nights sold, occupancy rate), jobs, workforce earnings, tourism and sales taxes, other fees collected.
- Quality of life – resident sentiment toward tourism, economic and non-economic impacts of tourism development.
- Quality of the visitor experience – visitor satisfaction.
- Quality of the natural environment – risks from changing climate, ecosystem health.

**1.3.2** Partner with an independent third party such as a university or contractor to collect data and conduct data analysis and interpretation that communicates the full scope of tourism’s impacts on the local economies, communities, and natural and cultural assets of Wabanaki Nations. The partner should prepare the tourism impact monitoring report in close collaboration with the WTA monitoring action team. Discuss with MOT how they may be able to assist Wabanaki Nations in monitoring tourism since they collect and report on tourism data on an ongoing basis. Data collections within Wabanaki Nations will need to be coordinated with, and approved by, Wabanaki Nations’ research boards.

**1.3.3** Release the report to Wabanaki Nations and key stakeholders annually through easily accessible media channels.

#### Implementation Partners

WTA monitoring action team participants, FDDC, MOT, University of Maine System

#### Resources

- MOT partnership to explore ways that their annual data gathering can include Wabanaki Nations
- Other state-level grant funding

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Core indicators for a holistic tourism impact monitoring system identified and tracked on an annual basis
- Number of annual reports published over time
- Number of views of online reports; number of report downloads

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- Annual reports of local destination marketing organizations

## 1.4 Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable advancement of cultural tourism

Establishing a long-term organizational structure for collaborative tourism management and marketing among Wabanaki Nations is essential for realizing the shared vision and stewardship goals outlined in the WCTP. This structure should embody the core values and principles of the WCTP, emphasizing trust-building, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability to all Wabanaki communities.

As previously mentioned in Initiative 1.1, the WTA is envisioned as a short-term collaborative management structure, likely lasting 1–3 years. During this time, stakeholders will work to develop a permanent structure for collaborative tourism management and marketing. In some destinations, ad hoc networks similar to the WTA have evolved into independent nonprofits, such as the North Dakota Native Tourism Alliance. The WTA acts as a bridge, providing the Wabanaki Nations an opportunity to explore and test different approaches to collaborative management, ultimately leading to informed recommendations for the permanent structure.

### Initiative 1.4: Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable development

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 4–5 (Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Define the optimal permanent organizational structure for collaborative tourism management and marketing.
2. Garner support from all key stakeholder groups for the establishment of a permanent collaborative tourism management and marketing.
3. Secure funding for the setup and continued operation of the organization.

#### Priority Actions

- 1.4.1** The Tribal Nations and FDDC lead discussions with WTA and other key stakeholders, including the MOT, to explore options for a long-term structure for collaborative tourism management and marketing. After wide consultation, consensus is sought on the preferred option and timeline for establishing this permanent structure. Some possible governance options are outlined below:
- Option 1: The WTA transitions from an ad hoc network to a formal organization (i.e., a destination management and marketing organization) that will work on behalf of all Wabanaki Nations.
  - Option 2: Two or more organizations (either existing, or new and existing) share responsibility for different aspects of destination marketing and management on behalf of all Wabanaki Nations.
- 1.4.2** Secure funding to establish the preferred permanent collaborative structure for tourism management and marketing.
- Identifying sources of stable funding for the permanent collaborative structure is crucial. Since levying a transient lodging tax is not possible, new approaches will need to be considered; for example, forming a Tourism Improvement District that encompasses Wabanaki Nations. New approaches should complement efforts to secure dedicated funding from the MOT for a Wabanaki Nations tourism region, similar to what MOT provides for the existing 8 tourism regions in Maine.
  - Develop a comprehensive fundraising strategy targeting key funding sources at the local, state, and federal levels, and work to secure financial support needed.

#### Implementation Partners

FDDC, Wabanaki Tribal Councils, MOT, other organizations involved in the WTA

## Initiative 1.4: Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable development

### Resources

- MOT partnership to explore ways that their annual data gathering can include Wabanaki Nations
- Other state-level grant funding
- Grant funding from other sources: private foundations, federal sources such as ANA and EDA

### Key Performance Indicators

- Functioning permanent structure for collaborative management of tourism
- Funding and human resources secured for start-up and ongoing operation of the permanent structure for collaborative management of tourism

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- Native tourism alliances in North Dakota and South Dakota





## Goal 2

### Foster community engagement and support for Wabanaki tourism.

#### Strategic Initiatives

- 2.1 Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations.
- 2.2 Enhance tribal councils' understanding of and collaboration on tourism initiatives.
- 2.3 Offer educational programs about Wabanaki Nations and their tourism efforts to tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine.

Educating Wabanaki leaders and community members about the multifaceted impacts of tourism, including its benefits and potential challenges, is pivotal for garnering broad support for tourism development. The cultural tourism fellows to be hired within each Wabanaki Nation will play a key role in initiating and sustaining efforts to raise awareness about tourism over time (see Initiative 1.2 for more details). Additionally, inviting key state partners to these tourism awareness-raising sessions is essential to foster efficient bilateral dialogue about Wabanaki community ideas and concerns as well as for trust-building.

Furthermore, research indicates that fostering entrepreneurship and providing insights into tourism empowers community members to actively participate in and contribute to sustainable tourism development efforts.

#### Measuring Success

Success will be measured in three ways:

1. Increased positive sentiment and widespread support for tourism development within the Wabanaki Nations.
2. Active support from tribal leadership for short-term and long-term collaborative tourism management and marketing efforts, as well as for the implementation of the WCTP.
3. Proactive recommendations from tourism operators and employees encouraging tourists to visit Wabanaki Nations.

#### 2.1 Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations

Cultural tourism fellows can play a vital role in facilitating continuous community engagement within the Wabanaki Nations, focusing on open discussions about tourism development and its implications. Case studies of Native American tourism development in communities throughout the United States can help inform conversations. These discussions are crucial to ensuring that communities have a voice in expressing their aspirations and concerns. By facilitating these discussions, we can ensure that tourism operates within parameters that are most suitable for each community. Over time, the establishment of tourism ambassadors recruited from Wabanaki communities can bolster the efforts of cultural tourism fellows to implement tourism initiatives within their respective communities.

## Initiative 2.1: Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations

### Implementation Timeline: Years 1–5 (Short- to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Enhance community awareness and understanding of tourism.
2. Secure community buy-in and support for tourism.

#### Priority Actions

**2.1.1** Develop a community engagement toolkit to be used by cultural tourism fellows to facilitate community discussions about tourism. The toolkit should contain suggestions for a series of meetings, including suggestions for meeting structure, suggested topics, and content that cultural tourism fellows can use to facilitate conversations.

**2.1.2** Organize community meetings focused on cultural tourism. Encourage elders and youth to participate in these community meetings. The content of the awareness-raising sessions can encompass the following key themes:

- Potential benefits of tourism in Wabanaki Nations, emphasizing its economic contribution and ways for community members to actively participate.
- Possible negative impacts of tourism and strategies for managing tourism to minimize negative effects.
- Community aspirations and concerns, and guidelines around the types of tourism to be developed within the community.
- Information about key local attractions slated for tourism development, to foster greater community pride in their offerings.
- The role of community members in creating a welcoming and safe destination for visitors.
- Ways tourism can thrive even in areas with less infrastructure, and how tourism products can be developed and improved over time.

Special emphasis should be placed on engaging with youth and elders, two vital groups within the community. This may necessitate creative thinking regarding the most effective mediums to reach these key target audiences. To build trust between Wabanaki communities and state partners, consideration should also be given to inviting state partners to attend a few of the tourism awareness-raising sessions (where appropriate) as a means of fostering efficient bilateral dialogue about Wabanaki community ideas and concerns.

**2.1.3** Develop an educational program for Wabanaki tourism ambassadors and recruit a cohort of tourism ambassadors from Wabanaki Nations to serve as promoters of tourism within Wabanaki communities and for visitors in Wabanaki Nations. Wabanaki tourism ambassadors can serve as advocates for tourism initiatives within their communities. They can play a key role in promoting tourism, sharing knowledge about local culture and attractions, and fostering positive relationships with visitors. Wabanaki tourism ambassadors can perform several crucial tasks:

- Providing information: Tourism ambassadors educate community members and visitors about local cultural heritage, attractions, and activities available within the community.
- Guiding tours: Ambassadors may lead tours for community groups and for people visiting significant cultural sites, landmarks, or natural attractions, offering insights into their historical and cultural significance.
- Supporting events: Tourism ambassadors can assist in organizing and facilitating events and activities aimed at promoting tourism and showcasing the community's unique offerings.
- Promoting sustainability: Tourism ambassadors advocate for responsible tourism practices that respect and preserve the environment, culture, and traditions of the Wabanaki Nations.

It will be critical to design and implement educational programs for ambassadors to teach them about Wabanaki cultural heritage and tourism attractions. Special attention should be given to integrating youth into the Wabanaki tourism ambassadors program, which may involve providing mentorship opportunities alongside the educational programming offered to all ambassadors.

While most destination marketing organizations focus their tourism ambassador programs on serving visitors, this initiative aims to broaden the scope by placing equal emphasis on engaging community members alongside visitors.

**Initiative 2.1: Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations****Implementation Partners**

- Tribal Councils, community leaders from Wabanaki Nations, FDDC, Katahdin Collaborative

**Resources**

- Grant funding: ANA, Office of Indian Economic Development – Bureau of Indian Affairs, EDA.

**Key Performance Indicators**

- Enhanced community awareness and understanding of tourism, along with the establishment of guidelines for sustainable tourism development within Wabanaki Nations
- Increased capacity for cultural tourism fellows to facilitate meaningful discussions about tourism within their communities
- Improved visitor experiences and increased promotion of Wabanaki tourism initiatives

**Case Studies for Inspiration**

- Most destination marketing organizations have tourism ambassador programs that are designed solely for visitors. See, for example, the [Certified Tourism Ambassador Network](#).





## 2.2 Enhance tribal councils' understanding of and collaboration on tourism initiatives

Curating events and experiences specifically tailored for tribal governments and community leaders will be crucial to garner sustained leadership and support across all Wabanaki Nations for the successful implementation of the shared vision and strategic initiatives outlined in the WCTP. Tribal governments and community leaders are essential to the sustainable development and successful management of Wabanaki tourism businesses, attractions, and visitor facilities.

It is acknowledged that tribal councils in Wabanaki Nations have numerous competing priorities, with tourism possibly not being a top concern. Therefore, organized activities should be compelling and should include a targeted call to action.

### Initiative 2.2: Enhance tribal councils' understanding of and collaboration on tourism initiatives

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 1–5 (Short- to Long-Term)

##### Objective

1. Increase tribal council members' understanding of the economic, cultural, and social benefits of tourism within Wabanaki Nations through targeted events and experiences.
2. Foster collaboration among tribal councils to actively participate in and support tourism initiatives, ensuring alignment with community goals and priorities.

##### Priority Actions

**2.2.1** Host educational webinars and strategic workshops, such as the annual tourism summit that the FDDC has organized, tailored to educate tribal council members and Wabanaki community leaders about the challenges, opportunities, and government roles inherent to tourism development. Organized activities should be compelling and should include a targeted call to action, acknowledging the limited bandwidth of Wabanaki tribal councils.

**2.2.2** Organize strategic activities to engage tribal council members in the process of assessing infrastructure development, workforce capacity building, and social and environmental needs associated with tourism development in Wabanaki communities.

**2.2.3** Identify specific opportunities for tribal government action, including the identification of funding opportunities and the alignment of tourism infrastructure and workforce development plans with priorities and existing projects of Wabanaki Nations.

##### Implementation Partners

- WTA organizations that include representatives from Wabanaki Nations and the FDDC, among others; tribal councils; cultural tourism fellows

##### Resources

- Grant funding: ANA, Office of Indian Economic Development – Bureau of Indian Affairs, EDA

##### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of Tribal Leaders attending educational webinars and strategic workshops
- Number of Wabanaki Nations actively supporting implementation of the WCTP

## 2.3 Offer educational programs about Wabanaki Nations and their tourism efforts to tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine

Destination management and marketing organizations often use familiarization trips, also called “fam trips” or “fam tours,” as essential tools to educate industry partners such as tour operators, travel advisors, influencers, and media personnel about the tourism offerings within a destination. Wabanaki Nations can innovatively transform the conventional “fam tour” concept into an educational opportunity for tourism operators and non-Native tourism frontline personnel that work in restaurants and hotels near Wabanaki communities. This co-opted fam trip concept involves offering a tour of Wabanaki communities that educates tourism professionals about Wabanaki cultures, existing Wabanaki tourism services, tourism experiences, and attractions. Equipping local frontline personnel and tourism operators with deeper knowledge about contemporary Wabanaki communities and their history will make them better able to serve as advocates and effectively encourage tourists to visit Wabanaki communities.

### Initiative 2.3: Offer educational programs about Wabanaki Nations and their tourism efforts to tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 3–5 (Medium-Term)

#### Objective

1. Enhance the knowledge and understanding of Wabanaki Nations and their tourism initiatives among tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine.

#### Priority Actions

**2.3.1** Design and organize annual fam trips tailored for tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine’s main tourism regions. Prioritize regions and cover 1–2 regions per year. Use the expertise of community tourism fellows and Wabanaki tourism ambassadors in planning and hosting these trips, while leveraging support from the MOT to secure industry engagement.

**2.3.2** Enhance the annual fam trips by incorporating a feedback component, allowing participants to interact with community members and provide valuable feedback during and after the experience. This feedback should encompass visitor insights on the actual experiences, suggestions for improvements, and ideas for sustained engagement.

#### Implementation Partners

- WTA, MOT, cultural tourism fellows

#### Resources

- MOT
- Grant funding: ANA grants, Office of Indian Economic Development – Bureau of Indian Affairs, EDA

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of annual fam trips organized in Maine’s main tourism regions
- Percentage of participants providing feedback during and after the fam trips

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- Pine Ridge Area Chamber of Commerce’s partnership with Travel South Dakota training tourism frontline personnel in and around Rapid City



## Goal 3

### Support entrepreneurship and the market readiness of tourism businesses

#### Strategic Initiatives

- 3.1 Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses.
- 3.2 Develop and implement standards for Wabanaki tourism operators.
- 3.3 Equip Wabanaki tourism operators with the skills to engage effectively with the travel trade for sales and marketing purposes.

Supporting the start-up and growth of Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of tourism in Wabanaki Nations. Fostering entrepreneurship within Wabanaki communities empowers local individuals to create economic opportunities while preserving and showcasing their unique cultural heritage. These businesses can serve as Wabanaki cultural ambassadors, offering authentic experiences that attract visitors seeking meaningful connections and enriching encounters. Furthermore, nurturing Wabanaki tourism enterprises contributes to the economic self-sufficiency and resilience of the Wabanaki Nations, ensuring that tourism development benefits the communities directly involved. Investing in Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses is thus a crucial step toward fostering inclusive and sustainable tourism growth while honoring and preserving Wabanaki cultures and traditions.

#### Measuring Success

Key measures of success are outlined below:

1. Quantity and growth of Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses.
2. Rise in the percentage of Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses achieving market or export readiness.
3. Number of Wabanaki tourism operators actively collaborating with travel trade for tourism promotion.

#### 3.1 Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses

The success of tourism development within Wabanaki Nations hinges on existing and new micro, small, and medium-sized tourism enterprises (MSTEs) providing a range of amenities and services. Implementing a practical and comprehensive Wabanaki tourism business incubator program is an important first step. This program can provide foundational training in financial literacy, personal development, start-up basics, strategic partnerships, and key considerations for navigating the tourism marketplace. The program's framework should be crafted by leveraging existing services and resources provided by local and regional organizations. Strategic support networks play a vital role in the continual development and improvements among MSTEs within Wabanaki communities.

Furthermore, to cultivate a sustainable tourism ecosystem that empowers entrepreneurs and MSTEs across Wabanaki communities, it is imperative to facilitate the formation of a network that fosters connectivity and collaboration among entrepreneurs throughout the Wabanaki Nations, thereby fostering a unified voice.

## Initiative 3.1: Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses

### Implementation Timeline: Years 1–5 (Short- to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Establish a Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurship program.
2. Facilitate launch of a network for MSTEs to foster a unified voice and representation.

#### Priority Actions

**3.1.1** Create a Wabanaki business incubator for existing and emerging tourism entrepreneurs and businesses that includes essential foundations of financial literacy, personal development, and strategic support for business start-up and growth. A business incubator program may be more suitable than a business accelerator since business incubators provide more flexible periods of support and offer diverse support services that include mentorship, funding, tailored programs and possibly office space. Incubators are also less competitive than business accelerator programs.

Phase 1 elements:

- Foundations in financial literacy terminology and concepts, including managing business accounts, tracking income and expenses, budgeting
- Understanding challenges associated with accessing capital and determining feasible paths for raising capital
- Understanding the important synergies between personal development, community well-being, and professional success

Phase 2 elements:

- Guidance on setting up and running a tourism enterprise. A wide range of business opportunities exist in the tourism value chain, such as tour guides, tour companies, culinary businesses, recreation, entertainment, crafts, and linkages with other key sectors such as agriculture.
- Business models and suggested models for various types of MSTEs, including strategic business partnerships that will improve business survival rates. The creative sector requires additional consideration, as many artisans prefer not to formalize their businesses. Innovative models should be explored, such as Tribal Economic Development Corporations starting businesses to serve as vehicles for artisans.
- Mentorship, peer-to-peer exchanges, networking, and a focus on identifying funding.
- Licensing requirements and the importance of compliance for maintaining tourism standards and marketability (linked to Initiative 3.2).
- Safeguarding intellectual property.
- Packaging, marketing, and sales of tourism products and experiences through the local and international tourism distribution systems.

For capacity-building efforts, consider partnering with organizations that may have training programs specific to Native American tourism enterprises, such as the Native American Development Corporation and the George Washington University's Cultural Tourism Enterprise Training Program. To build the tourism business incubator program, consider tapping into existing FDDC programs and resources available through organizations outlined in the Implementation Partners section of this strategic initiative.

**3.1.2** Establish a platform for Wabanaki tourism businesses to convene, fostering networking, idea exchange, mutual support, standard setting, capacity building, and unified representation. This initiative could evolve into a chamber of commerce over time, but initially it can be established as a network.

#### Implementation Partners

- FDDC and other community development finance institutions (CDFIs), National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development, Maine Small Business Development Centers, Maine Center for Entrepreneurs, SCORE Maine

### Initiative 3.1: Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses

#### Resources

- EDA's Build to Scale program funds organizations supporting small business development.
- The USDA Rural Business Development program supports organizations supporting small business development.
- Bank foundations support CDFIs investing in promoting entrepreneurship, e.g. Wells Fargo's Invest Native program.
- The Intertribal Agriculture Council may be able to support agritourism businesses.
- Native Arts and Culture Foundation may be able to provide support to enhance the market readiness of artists.

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of Wabanaki tourism businesses across all Wabanaki communities
- Number of Wabanaki tourism businesses accessing available resources and participating in the forum/platform created

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- Pine Ridge Area Chamber of Commerce (South Dakota)



## 3.2 Develop and implement standards for Wabanaki tourism operators

Developing Wabanaki guidelines for cultural tourism operators can foster ongoing improvements in MSTEs' operations. These guidelines can facilitate progression through different stages of readiness, from visitor readiness to market readiness and ultimately export readiness.

<b>Initiative 3.2: Develop and implement standards for Wabanaki tourism operators</b>
<b>Implementation Timeline: Years 2–3 (Medium-Term)</b>
<p><b>Objective</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish Wabanaki guidelines for cultural experiences that uphold the values that Wabanaki communities deem most important.</li> <li>2. Develop a toolkit and provide capacity-building resources to support Wabanaki tourism businesses in adopting the Wabanaki guidelines for cultural experiences.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Priority Actions</b></p> <p><b>3.2.1.</b> Convene a participatory process involving stakeholders from all Wabanaki communities to identify the values they wish to be upheld by Wabanaki entrepreneurs and tourism businesses offering cultural experiences. This process can be coordinated through the cultural tourism fellows (see Initiative 1.2 for more details about the fellows).</p> <p><b>3.2.2</b> Conduct a comprehensive review of existing guidelines for Native American cultural experiences to tailor a set of guidelines specifically for Wabanaki communities, reflecting their unique realities and needs. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's National Guidelines for Cultural Tourism Experiences can be used as a main reference document.</p> <p><b>3.2.3</b> Develop a comprehensive toolkit to guide Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses in conducting self-assessments of their operations against established guidelines. Provide ongoing capacity-building support to facilitate the adoption of these guidelines. The Caribbean Tourism Organization's "Community-Based Tourism Enterprise Handbook" serves as an exemplary model for practical toolkit development.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Partners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FDDC and Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal economic development corporations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Performance Indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses using the toolkit to conduct self-assessments of their operations against established guidelines, demonstrating successful adoption and implementation of the guidelines.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case Studies for Inspiration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada's National Guidelines for Cultural Tourism Experiences</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Caribbean Tourism Organization's Community-Based Tourism Enterprise Handbook</a></li> </ul>

### 3.3 Equip Wabanaki tourism operators with the skills to engage effectively with the travel trade for sales and marketing purposes

Intermediaries such as outbound tour operators and travel advisors, commonly referred to as the travel trade, play a pivotal role in promoting destinations and attracting visitors. Tourism destinations and inbound tour operators leverage trade shows as key opportunities to connect with potential business partners interested in showcasing and selling their offerings.

Travel trade shows and industry events serve as integral components in tourism development, facilitating networking and collaboration between suppliers and buyers, both locally and internationally. These events can provide Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs and businesses a platform for meeting potential outbound tour operators and travel advisors who may be keen to explore new offerings and forge strategic business partnerships.

This initiative aims to equip existing and emerging Wabanaki tourism entrepreneurs, businesses, and managers of attractions with the skills needed to effectively use trade shows such as IPW, which is organized annually by the U.S. Travel Association, to sell cultural tourism experiences. IPW showcases U.S. suppliers of travel products and destinations, and attracts international and domestic travel buyers and journalists representing more than 60 countries.

#### Initiative 3.3: Equip Wabanaki tourism operators with the skills to engage effectively with the travel trade for sales and marketing purposes

##### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–3 (Medium-Term)

##### Objective

1. Strengthen the capacity of Wabanaki tourism operators to engage and collaborate with the travel trade industry, thereby boosting visitation and sales to Wabanaki destinations.

##### Priority Actions

**3.3.1** Identify 1–2 key travel trade shows to attend annually in collaboration with the MOT and AIANTA, both of which may offer co-op opportunities for participation in trade shows.

**3.3.2** Organize brief preparatory sessions for Wabanaki tourism operators to explain trade show basics and provide strategies for maximizing use of the marketplace offered at these shows. AIANTA offers a training session that prepares Native American tourism suppliers to attend international trade shows.

**3.3.3** The WTA should ensure a coordinated presence at the trade shows and aim to provide some support to Wabanaki tourism operators who are attending.

##### Implementation Partners

- WTA, MOT, AIANTA

##### Resources

- Office of Indian Economic Development – Bureau of Indian Affairs
- MOT

##### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of key travel trade shows attended annually in collaboration with partners
- Attendance rate at preparatory sessions for Wabanaki tourism operators, indicating engagement and readiness for trade show participation

##### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [AIANTA's Go International](#) training program



## Goal 4

### Create and deliver Wabanaki cultural experiences

#### Strategic Initiatives

**4.1 Train entrepreneurs to develop cultural tourism experiences.**

**4.2 Increase the number of trained and certified Wabanaki tour guides.**

**4.3 Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines.**

**4.4 Develop Wabanaki cultural tour itineraries along travel routes.**

Creating and delivering authentic Wabanaki experiences enhances cultural tourism by helping visitors interact with and celebrate the rich heritage and traditions of the Wabanaki people. Community participation is vital to the creation of authentic experiences and visitor resources that engage and enlighten visitors while promoting respect and safeguarding Wabanaki communities, cultures, and lands.

People with exceptional local knowledge and stories, including artisans, performers, storytellers, and outdoor recreation experts, can serve as tourism ambassadors, tour guides, and mentors, and can create independent tourism activities and experiences. Initiatives 4.1 and 4.2 outline opportunities for Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members to learn how to design, promote, and operate unique tourism experiences and become certified guides. These initiatives can provide foundational training, technical assistance, and resources to help entrepreneurs and tourism organizations learn how to operate an effective and market-ready tourism business.

Visitor education is an important component of tour experiences. Visitors new to Wabanaki communities and cultural experiences often have questions about appropriate protocols, dress, and behaviors while visiting tribal lands. Initiative 4.3 outlines steps to develop a regional visitor etiquette guide to educate visitors and tourism industry professionals and encourage responsible, respectful visitation.

Initiative 4.4 presents opportunities to create engaging tour itineraries that encourage responsible exploration along designated travel routes. Itineraries describe unique attractions, events, and activities and give visitors all the information they need to have a safe, enjoyable experience that supports local Wabanaki communities.

#### Measuring Success

1. Wabanaki communities' and entrepreneurs' use of training, technical assistance, and resources such as tourism experience studios to design, promote, and operate tourism experiences.
2. The range and quality of unique Wabanaki experiences offered to visitors.
3. Development, distribution, and use of visitor etiquette guidelines by destination organizations, tour operators, and Wabanaki Nations.
4. Positive testimonials, high reviews, and increased repeat visitation by individuals who have participated in Wabanaki experiences.



## 4.1 Train entrepreneurs to develop experience ideas into dynamic tours

Tourism experience development studios (TEDS) can help Wabanaki communities and entrepreneurs learn how to develop, price, and operate sustainable and authentic tourism experiences. Through TEDS workshops, coaching, and technical assistance, Wabanaki entrepreneurs can learn how to design compelling tour experiences for specific visitor markets, develop business operations, calculate competitive pricing, refine customer service protocols, craft engaging marketing and promotional materials, and navigate intellectual property rights.

For example, the studios can support companies like the Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company and the Passamaquoddy Maple in developing agritourism experiences that educate visitors about traditional Wabanaki gathering and preservation methods through unique, engaging hands-on activities. Respondents to the Wabanaki Cultural Tourism Community Survey support the development of more visitor experiences, particularly for cultural tourism—traditional music performances and art demonstrations; tours of cultural centers, museums, historical places, and community gardens; and outdoor recreation experiences such as guided hiking, camping, and hunting expeditions.

Through the new Cultural Tourism Fellowship Program, and in partnership with GW, FDDC will provide TEDS workshops to help Wabanaki entrepreneurs create new Wabanaki-owned tourism enterprises and strengthen existing ones.

### Initiative 4.1: Train entrepreneurs to develop experience ideas into dynamic tours

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 1-3 (Short to Medium-Term)

##### Objective

1. Organize tourism experience development studios to help Wabanaki communities and entrepreneurs develop sustainable, immersive experiences.
2. Provide Wabanaki entrepreneurs and business owners/operators with foundational resources, skills, and practice to support delivery of quality, authentic experiences.

##### Priority Actions

**4.1.1** Train WCTI fellows and establish partnership agreements to work with experienced Wabanaki guides and culture educators to co-create a TEDS program specifically for Wabanaki communities.

**4.1.2** Recruit a cohort of interested individuals and organizations from Wabanaki communities to participate in a series of TEDS workshops. Tourism community fellows (see Initiative 1.2 for details) will support the program.

**4.1.3** Offer studios that help participants develop crucial tourism skills:

- Designing authentic tour itineraries that feature unique assets and are tailored to specific audiences.
- Operating tours, with fundamentals such as key communications, logistics planning, safety protocols, and customer service.
- Understanding visitor market demographics and identifying desired visitor markets.
- Developing competitive and profitable pricing.
- Creating compelling marketing and promotional materials that convey the tour's unique value proposition.
- Protecting intellectual property rights and accessing available resources.

**4.1.4** Inform participants about ways to fund business start-up costs (grants, loans, accelerator programs and competitions, etc.).

**4.1.5** Organize mentorship and technical assistance opportunities so studio participants can continue learning and improving their tour offerings and business operations through one-on-one coaching, technical assistance, and inspiration from colleagues.

**4.1.6** Coordinate testing of newly designed tours so participants can practice implementing and refining tours based on feedback.

## Initiative 4.1: Train entrepreneurs to develop experience ideas into dynamic tours

### Implementation Partners

WCTI Fellows, experienced tour guides and cultural educators (e.g., Penobscot Nation Cultural & Historic Preservation Training and Education Program), GW, E for All (Entrepreneurship for All), Native Business Center, MOT and partner industry professionals

### Resources

- WCTI Funding from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the MOT for initial studios and fellow trainings
- GW Tourism Experience Development Studio program
- Host venues for in-person workshops (cultural centers, museums, schools)
- Grant funding and technical assistance to create itinerary brochures, maps, and website content
- Scholarships/subsidies to support participation from Wabanaki entrepreneurs and business owners/operators

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of individuals and organizations who participate in the TEDS workshops, mentoring, and test tours
- Level of participant satisfaction for workshop content and delivery
- Number of tours successfully implemented and refined based on industry feedback
- Percentage of participants reporting increased revenue from their tour businesses after participating in the studio

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [South Dakota & North Dakota Indigenous Tour Development with Destination America/Trafalgar](#)
- [Oregon Tourism Studios](#)



## 4.2 Increase the number of trained and certified Wabanaki tour guides

Tour guides can make the difference between an average trip and a great one through the quality of their interactions with visitors and the knowledge they share. The job entails, among other things, knowing the subject in great detail—history, context, cultural importance and anything else someone may ask. Wabanaki tour guides have a unique opportunity to share their stories and educate people who are unfamiliar with Wabanaki history and culture. They are essential to the successful implementation and management of Wabanaki tourism experiences.

For over ten years, experienced and knowledgeable Penobscot guides have provided tour guide training services to Wabanaki individuals. Currently, there are about a dozen known Wabanaki guides who provide experiences such as canoe and hiking tours, museum and culture tours, traditional arts and crafts demonstrations, and hunting and fishing adventures. More are needed.

Initiative 4.2 outlines actions to support and grow existing tour guide training programming. This initiative is intended to work in concert with Initiative 4.1 by helping Wabanaki TEDS participants become certified tour guides.

## Initiative 4.2: Increase the number of trained and certified Wabanaki tour guides

### Implementation Timeline: Years 1-3 (Short to Medium-Term)

#### Objective

1. Support existing Wabanaki tour guide training programs with funding and partnerships.
2. Train and certify more Wabanaki tour guides.

#### Priority Actions

- 4.2.1** Organize collaborative planning meetings to discuss existing tour guide training programs that could be useful for Wabanaki guides (for example, Wabanaki culture guide training, outdoor recreation guide training).
- 4.2.2** Explore the creation of a Wabanaki Cultural Tour Guide Certification program focused specifically on Wabanaki culture and heritage and visitor etiquette. Through organized meetings with representation from all Wabanaki communities, discuss potential lead and partner organizations as well as funding and resource needs.
- 4.2.3** Partner with the Maine's Outdoor Learning Center to create opportunities for nature and outdoor recreation Wabanaki guides to participate in the Registered Maine Guide Training program; discuss opportunities to create a new curriculum or adaptations to current program courses to include traditional knowledge provided by Wabanaki experts.
- 4.2.4** Promote tour guide training programs in Wabanaki communities and help interested entrepreneurs access training and become certified guides.
- 4.2.5** Sponsor test tours and apprenticeships so tour guide trainees can practice their craft and learn from experienced guides and cultural educators.

#### Implementation Partners

Wabanaki guides and cultural educators, WCTI Leadership Team, FDDC staff and fellows, Wabanaki cultural centers, museums, and educational institutions, Wabanaki community members, Maine's Outdoor Learning Center, Mahoosuc Guide Services, Maine Professional Guides Association, and the MOT

#### Resources

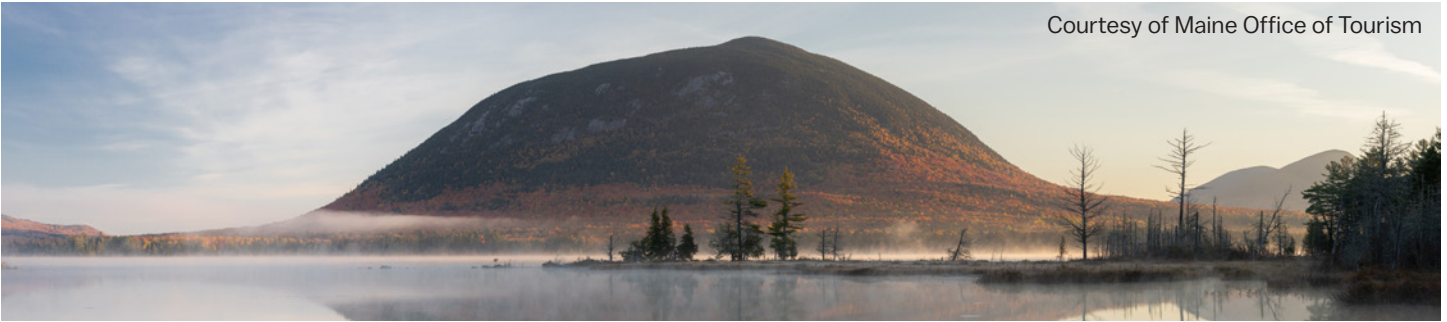
- Existing Wabanaki tour guide training programs (e.g., Penobscot Nation Cultural & Historic Preservation Training and Education Program)
- Registered Maine Guide Training program (nature/outdoor recreation guiding only)
- Funding for planning meetings and program development (Wabanaki Culture Guide Certification)
- Funding for promotion of available programs and participant sponsorships

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Creation of Wabanaki-specific guide training courses/programs
- Number of new Wabanaki tour guides trained and certified
- Number of new Wabanaki tours provided across all five communities

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- Penobscot Nation Cultural & Historic Preservation Training and Education Program
- [Museum of Underwater Art Indigenous Guides Training Program](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

### 4.3 Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines

Visitor etiquette guidelines educate visitors, tour operators, and industry stakeholders about how to be responsible and respectful when visiting Wabanaki communities, lands, and waters. This initiative will provide all tourism enterprises who promote or provide information about Wabanaki tourism experiences with visitor etiquette guidelines and information resources that educate visitors and inspire respectful and responsible travel practices.

WCTI Fellows will conduct listening sessions in each Wabanaki community to identify core principles to include in visitor etiquette guidelines and determine whether to create unique guidelines for each community or one regional guide for all visitors.

#### Initiative 4.3: Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines

##### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–3 (Medium-Term)

##### Objective

1. Educate visitors, tour operators, and industry stakeholders about how to responsibly and respectfully visit Wabanaki communities and lands.

##### Priority Actions

**4.3.1** Assess existing visitor etiquette guidelines from Wabanaki Nations and other Native American destinations (e.g., Mi'kmaq Guidelines).

**4.3.2** Conduct listening sessions with Wabanaki communities to identify core principles to inform etiquette guidelines.

**4.3.3** Using research on guidelines/industry standards and feedback from the community listening sessions, create visitor etiquette guidelines to educate visitors and operators about how to participate in experiences responsibly and respectfully in Wabanaki communities and lands. The visitor etiquette guide should, at a minimum, cover the following topics:

- Visitor behavior related to photography and interactions with Wabanaki community members.
- Treatment of natural resources, and tribal laws and permit requirements for outdoor recreation on tribal lands.
- Visitor etiquette and expected attire and behavior at cultural sites and events.
- Visitor awareness of local customs.

**4.3.4** Distribute and promote the visitor etiquette guidelines to destination organizations, tour operators, and industry partners, following partner use guidelines.

##### Implementation Partners

FDDC staff and cultural tourism fellows, WCTI Leadership Team, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki cultural centers, museums, and educational institutions, Wabanaki guides and cultural educators, Wabanaki community members (e.g., elders), MOT, and local and regional tourism organizations

### Initiative 4.3: Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines

#### Resources

- Existing Wabanaki visitor etiquette guidelines (and guidelines for other Native American destinations)
- Funding for listening sessions, guideline creation, promotion, and distribution

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of visitors exposed to educational materials on responsible and respectful visits to Wabanaki communities and lands.
- Percentage of visitors, operators, and stakeholders reporting improved understanding and application of responsible visitation practices.
- Number of destination organizations, tour operators, and industry partners receiving and adopting the visitor etiquette guide.
- Number of times with which the guides are accessed, downloaded, and distributed.
- Feedback from visitors, tour operators, and industry stakeholders about the usefulness and effectiveness of the visitor etiquette guide.

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Indigenous Tourism British Columbia - How to Travel Respectfully](#)
- [South Dakota Visitor Etiquette Guidelines](#)
- [Hawai'i Travel Tips](#) and [Ma'ema'e Hawai'i Style and Resource Toolkit](#)
- [Akwesasne Visitor Etiquette](#)
- North Dakota Visitor Etiquette Guidelines

## 4.4 Develop Wabanaki cultural tourism itineraries along travel routes

Tour itineraries are effective resources for destination promotion and visitor management, and can encourage visitors to support local businesses. Well-designed itineraries educate visitors about unique attractions, events, and activities along designated travel routes, encourage responsible exploration, and provide all the information necessary for a safe and enjoyable experience. Engaging tour itineraries that include experience descriptions, attraction and guide contact information, inspiring images, and travel tips are essential to effective and responsible promotion of Wabanaki experiences. Destination organizations, tour operators, travel writers, and booking platforms use these resources to ensure accurate information about the destination and attractions. Itineraries can also be excellent storytelling resources: curated experience recommendations would give Wabanaki tourism enterprises and communities a new channel to tell their story and a new opportunity to command the public narrative about Wabanaki cultures and history.

Popular travel routes (e.g., scenic byways), concept-based experiences (e.g., cultural sites and museums or parks and nature experiences), and unique seasonal offerings (e.g., Wabanaki events/festivals or guided hunting/fishing) all present excellent opportunities for unique and engaging itineraries.

During work sessions, Wabanaki stakeholders emphasized a desire to go slowly in developing itineraries, preferring to start with guided experiences and to limit promotion of self-guided itineraries (with exceptions for established museums/culture centers and state/national park attractions). Collaboration within and between Wabanaki communities will be critical to ensure itineraries provide appropriate, accurate information about activities and encourage respectful community interactions while limiting negative environmental and social impacts.

Initiative 4.4 describes broad actions to develop and distribute Wabanaki tour itineraries. Key infrastructure upgrades associated with guiding visitors are further outlined under Goal 5.

## Initiative 4.4: Develop Wabanaki cultural tourism itineraries along travel routes

### Implementation Timeline: Years 3–4 (Medium-Term)

#### Objective

1. Create unique tour itineraries that responsibly promote Wabanaki attractions, events, and experiences.

#### Priority Actions

**4.4.1** Organize planning meetings to convene Wabanaki tour guides, business owners, and cultural program managers to discuss and create unique itineraries. Identify all visitor- and market-ready Wabanaki attractions, sites, and experiences and then brainstorm unique itinerary combinations for varied trip lengths (multi-hour, multi-day) with consideration for seasonality and existing popular experiences. Examples:

- Multi-day loop itinerary that guides visitors to visit all Wabanaki Nation communities, featuring Wabanaki-owned lodging, restaurants, shopping, attractions, and experiences. (This could include partnering with First Nations communities in Canada, for an international itinerary.)
- Multi-hour tour itineraries along scenic byways (Moosehead Lake, Million Dollar View, the Bold Coast, Blackwoods, Schoodic National, St. John Valley Cultural, Fish River, Katahdin Woods & Waters) that feature Wabanaki businesses and attractions.
- Itineraries for all seasons, providing visitors with unique and enjoyable experiences such as guided ice fishing in winter, cultural center/museum visits in spring, community events/festivals in the summer, and nature viewing and guided hunting in autumn.
- Concept-based itineraries such as dark sky tours, Wabanaki food and plant medicine walks, waterway tours, art and music demonstrations, and audio-history and language tours.

**4.4.2** Create engaging content featuring developed itineraries on tourism websites, social media platforms, visitor guides (digital and print), and printed brochures. Content should include maps, experience descriptions, booking information, and trip tips.

**4.4.3** Collaborate with partner organizations and businesses to promote completed itineraries (e.g., MOT, AIANTA, Native American Travel, travel websites, blogs and magazines, influencer social media features, visitor guides and marketing campaigns).

#### Implementation Partners

FDCC staff and fellows, WCTI Leadership Team, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki cultural centers, museums, and educational institutions, Wabanaki guides and cultural educators, Wabanaki community members, attraction, land, and event managers, scenic byway managers/promoters, MOT, and local and regional tourism organizations

#### Resources

- Wabanaki Asset Inventory and Market Readiness Assessment (SAR)
- Maine Indian Basket Makers Guide
- Downeast Maine National Heritage Area
- Existing itineraries along scenic byways
- Existing and in-development itineraries in central-northern Maine
- Funding for planning meetings, content creation, and promotion materials

## Initiative 4.4: Develop Wabanaki cultural tourism itineraries along travel routes

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of Wabanaki tourism itineraries created
- Number of Wabanaki businesses, organizations, and communities featured in itineraries
- Number and reach of media features about published Wabanaki itineraries.
- Number of visitors who used the itineraries to guide their trip planning
- Visitor volumes and spending impacts for Wabanaki communities, businesses, and organizations following itinerary promotion

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Indigenous Tourism British Columbia Travel Ideas](#)
- [NativeAmerica.Travel Itineraries](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism



## Goal 5 Enhance wayfinding and placemaking

### Strategic Initiatives

- 5.1 Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources.
- 5.2 Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions.
- 5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options.
- 5.4 Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions.

Goal 5 aims to promote the establishment of more Wabanaki-owned and -operated tourism attractions, sites, accommodations, and amenities to ensure that more of the economic benefits of tourism remain in Wabanaki communities. This goal also seeks to enhance the overall visitor experience through the improvement of infrastructure and information services.

Wayfinding encompasses both physical and digital resources that effectively guide visitors and educate them about their location, nearby attractions and sites, local amenities, and the character of the area. Wayfinding can encourage people to explore and spend more time in the destination. Placemaking in tourism development involves intentionally designing and enhancing public spaces to make them more attractive, engaging, and enjoyable for both the local community and visitors.

Investments in wayfinding and placemaking are essential for fostering a sustainable and vibrant tourism industry. Wabanaki community needs should be prioritized in the implementation of these initiatives, ensuring they reflect the values and aspirations of Wabanaki communities. A great place to live is also a great place to visit, so investments in improving visitor resources and services can enhance resident quality of life.

Goal 5 strategic initiatives are capital intensive and will require long-term partnerships between Wabanaki Nations, and industry, state, and federal partners. Several projects focusing on wayfinding and placemaking investments, such as the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument, have been underway for some time; therefore, it will be important to collaborate with existing initiatives and leverage their efforts as a foundation for further development.

### Measuring Success

Key measures of success are outlined below.

1. Active involvement of Wabanaki communities in informing the design and focus of infrastructure investments.
2. Range of public-private-community partnerships forged and strengthened between Wabanaki Nations and industry, state, and federal partners to fund and implement projects.
3. Positive feedback from Wabanaki community members about the quality of new wayfinding and placemaking infrastructure.
4. Positive testimonials, reviews, and a higher rate of repeat visitation from visitors who have experienced Wabanaki communities, landscapes, and cultural offerings.

Tribal government support is essential for the sustainable development and management of tourism in Wabanaki communities. Partnerships with industry, state, and federal organizations are also important to assess the feasibility of new infrastructure development and to secure sustainable funding for development and maintenance.





Courtesy of Jayson Photography

### **5.1 Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources**

Establishing a Wabanaki tourism wayfinding map and digital resources serves as a powerful tool for promoting cultural pride, supporting economic development, and fostering sustainable tourism. For visitors, a wayfinding map and digital resources offer guidance and insight into the unique cultural and natural heritage of Wabanaki lands and waters, and enables visitors to navigate the region with ease, discover hidden gems, and engage with local communities, fostering meaningful and authentic experiences. Wayfinding resources are essential to promote Wabanaki-owned businesses, attractions, and cultural experiences, supporting the growth and sustainability of Wabanaki tourism enterprises. This in turn generates economic opportunities, creates jobs, and empowers Wabanaki communities to share their stories and traditions as they prefer.

The process for developing wayfinding resources is as important as the final products. The development of a wayfinding map and digital resources involves collaboration and consultation with Wabanaki governments, communities, and stakeholders. This collaboration fosters community engagement, builds partnerships, and strengthens relationships among diverse groups, contributing to the collective well-being of Wabanaki communities.

By integrating traditional ecological knowledge and sustainable practices, a wayfinding map and digital resources can also promote responsible tourism and environmental stewardship. By encouraging respect for the land, waterways, and sacred sites, these initiatives help to safeguard Wabanaki cultural and natural resources for future generations.

## Initiative 5.1: Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources

### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–5 (Medium to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Develop a wayfinding map and accompanying digital resources that highlight Wabanaki cultures and languages and effectively guide visitors to responsibly experience Wabanaki communities and attractions.
2. Through partnerships, design and develop Wabanaki wayfinding signage, including static signs, digital signs, and kiosks.

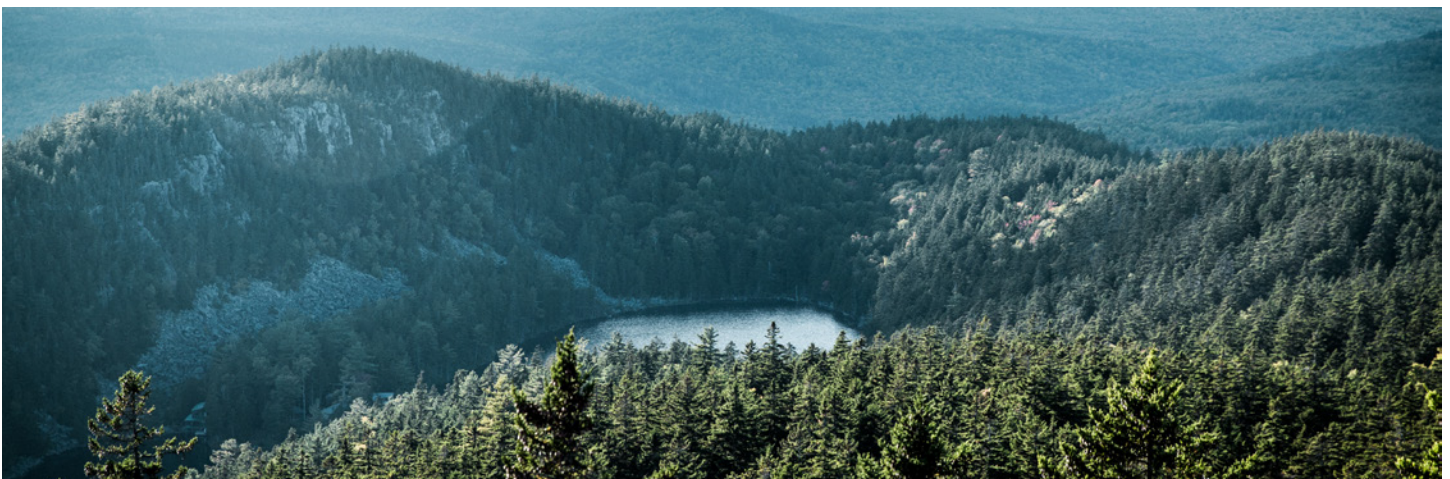
#### Priority Actions

**5.1.1** Convene meetings with representatives from Wabanaki Nations, local municipalities, tourism organizations, and relevant stakeholders to discuss the vision and objectives for wayfinding resources.

- Identify key partners and stakeholders who will contribute to the development, implementation, and maintenance of digital and static signage resources.
- Inventory assessment needs of all existing physical and digital wayfinding signs and resources.
- Secure funding for a wayfinding initiative that addresses priority needs and is aligned with the brand (see Goal 6).

**5.1.2** Assess all existing physical signage (wayfinding and educational) and conduct feasibility studies for new physical signage related to Wabanaki communities and visitor activities.

- Evaluate the current state of all existing physical signage to identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and areas for improvement.
  - Document and catalog all existing signage.
  - Assess the physical state of each sign (e.g., readability, damage, visibility).
  - Evaluate whether signs are fulfilling their intended purpose.
  - Document whether signs accurately and respectfully represent Wabanaki communities.
  - Gather feedback from community members and visitors on the clarity and helpfulness of current signs.
- Determine the practicality and advisability of implementing new signs or improving existing ones.
  - Assess the technical requirements and challenges of implementing new signage (design, materials, installation).
  - Evaluate costs and identify potential funding sources.
  - Analyze maintenance and operation requirements.
  - Consider environmental impacts, especially in natural or protected areas.
  - Ensure proposed signs align with Wabanaki cultural values and requirements.
- Support the implementation of physical sign installation projects including project management, fundraising, budget management, partner coordination, resource procurement and contractor coordination.



## Initiative 5.1: Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources

**5.1.3** Collaborate with Wabanaki cultural experts, elders, and community members as well as state, municipal, and industry stakeholders to develop content for a Wabanaki tourism wayfinding map and accompanying digital resources.

- Review the tourism assets presented in the Wabanaki Tourism Asset Inventory to confirm which sites, attractions, businesses, organizations, and services should be included.
- Curate a diverse range of content, including maps, photos, videos, audio recordings, stories, and educational materials that showcase Wabanaki cultures, history, and traditions.
- Assess available technologies and platforms for developing and distributing the wayfinding map and digital resources, considering factors such as accessibility, usability, and scalability.
- Engage designers, developers, and technical experts to determine the most suitable digital tools, apps, or platforms.
- Conduct user testing and feedback sessions with stakeholders, tourists, and representatives from Wabanaki communities to evaluate the usability, functionality, and content of the digital resources.
- Launch the wayfinding map and digital resources to the public, media, and stakeholders.
  - Use social media, events, and partnerships to promote awareness and encourage engagement.
  - Provide training and capacity-building opportunities for Wabanaki community members, tourism operators, and stakeholders on how to use and maintain the digital resources.
  - Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the usage, impact, and effectiveness of the wayfinding map and digital resources over time.

### Implementation Partners

Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki businesses and organizations, Wabanaki language keepers, historians, and cultural educators, Wabanaki community members, local municipalities, tourism industry organizations and boards (byways), nonprofit organizations, Maine Department of Transportation, Katahdin Collaborative, MOT, U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Indian Affairs

### Resources

- Wabanaki language, history, and culture education resources
- Wabanaki Tourism Asset Inventory
- Wabanaki signage catalogue
- The University of Maine Wabanaki Signage Project
- Maine Department of Tourism digital platform
- Grant funding for the development of the map and resources

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of new signage infrastructure projects identified through feasibility studies
- Amount of secured funding and resources for signage infrastructure projects
- Number of visits/downloads the digital platform or wayfinding maps received
- Number of contributions, such as user-generated content or suggestions, provided by Wabanaki community members
- Feedback rating or satisfaction level reported by users, including Wabanaki community members and visitors
- Quality of compatibility and accessibility of the digital resources across different devices and platforms, ensuring broad accessibility to users

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Penobscot Nation Maps](#)
- [Māori Maps \(New Zealand\)](#)
- [Trans Canada Trail: Honoring Indigenous Language Through Wayfinding Signage](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

## 5.2 Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions

Recognizing the importance of enhancing visitor experiences while respecting and preserving Wabanaki cultural heritage, this initiative seeks to collaborate closely with Tribal Nations, local municipalities, and stakeholders to identify strategic opportunities for sustainable tourism development. Through careful planning and stakeholder consultation, infrastructure improvements can support economic development, foster cultural preservation, and enhance the sense of place within Wabanaki communities. Developing new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions ensures that Wabanaki communities retain more economic benefits from tourism.

Wabanaki communities have a variety of visitor ready attractions and experiences. The most established Wabanaki attractions primarily revolve around cultural heritage; for example, cultural centers, museums, and historical sites. While developing this plan, Wabanaki stakeholders have identified opportunities to create additional attractions that celebrate Wabanaki cultures and heritage, and forge stronger connections to nature, outdoor recreation activities, events, and culinary experiences. The market readiness assessment of existing and potential tourism attractions and sites is presented separately in the SAR.

Initiative 5.2 provides high-level guidance for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions, including Wabanaki Visitor Centers.

## Initiative 5.2: Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions

### Implementation Timeline: Years 4–5 (Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Create new visitor infrastructure and attractions that respect and support Wabanaki cultural heritage, traditions, and stories, contributing to cultural preservation and fostering community pride.
2. Support sustainable economic development by creating new tourism opportunities, generating revenue, and providing employment while minimizing environmental impact and respecting the values and needs of the local community.

#### Priority Actions

**5.2.1** Support the development of feasibility plans, including impact assessments and project scopes, for new attractions and facilities in all Wabanaki communities. Feasibility plans should include strategies to secure public-private funding and should align with tribal government priorities.

- Convene Wabanaki leadership and key stakeholders to determine all potential visitor infrastructure and prioritize projects that will have the greatest positive community impact while minimizing environmental disturbances.
- Conduct extensive consultations with Wabanaki communities, Tribal Leaders, elders, youth, and stakeholders to gather input, feedback, and ideas for tourism development priorities and preferences.
- Review the Market Readiness Assessment (conducted as part of the plan development process) to understand the readiness of attractions; conduct a thorough assessment of cultural resources, including sacred sites, traditional knowledge, stories, and artifacts, to inform the design and development of attractions.
- Contract with placemaking experts who have experience working with Wabanaki Nations (or other Native American communities) to produce comprehensive feasibility studies including impact assessments and potential funding options.

**5.2.2** Explore the development of one or more Wabanaki visitor centers focused on providing visitors and residents with engaging and educational information about Wabanaki history, communities, and experience offerings.

- Create a steering committee with diverse representation from all Wabanaki communities to guide the design and development of one or more Wabanaki visitor centers.
- Collectively decide whether the communities prefer one centrally located Wabanaki visitor center or a new visitor center for each Wabanaki community.
- Assess all existing visitor facilities (museums, cultural centers, visitor centers, etc.) and decide whether to develop new facilities or use existing infrastructure; where necessary, identify potential locations for visitor center(s), preferring strategic location(s) that are easy for visitors to access
- Conduct community listening and visioning sessions with Wabanaki stakeholders to decide design components of Wabanaki visitor center facilities, and what elements should be included.
- Contract experts to facilitate the entire design and development process to ensure the centers and the displays, exhibits, and features are culturally appropriate, unique, noteworthy, and built to high sustainability standards.

#### Implementation Partners

Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki tourism businesses and organizations, Wabanaki community members, tourism industry and placemaking experts, financial institutions and development specialists, state agencies (e.g., MOT, Office of Outdoor Recreation, Maine Department of Transportation)

#### Resources

- Funding for feasibility studies and project implementation (grants, investments, fundraising campaigns)
- Steering Committees to guide the planning, design, and development process
- Contracted developers (design and build)
- Native Business Center

## Initiative 5.2: Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number and quality of feasibility studies and project scopes that have been developed for tourism infrastructure, including attractions, lodging, facilities, and placemaking projects.
- Economic benefits generated, measured by increased tourism spending, job creation, and business development.
- Satisfaction level and feedback from visitors and Wabanaki community members about the new infrastructure improvements.
- Number and quality of protections and design principles established to minimize environmental impact and enhance long-term viability.

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Tekakapimək Contact Station](#)
- [National Monument desk at Patten Lumberman's Museum](#)

## 5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options.

Providing accommodations that suit diverse visitor preferences and extending the number and length of overnight stays are both crucial to increased Wabanaki tourism. Recognizing this, Initiative 5.3 promotes the establishment of a spectrum of lodging options reflecting the distinctive cultural heritage of Wabanaki communities. Technical assistance, funding opportunities, and regulatory guidance can help Wabanaki communities and entrepreneurs develop new lodging facilities such as eco-lodges, glamping sites, campgrounds, traditional lodges, boutique hotels, and vacation rentals.

From campgrounds to B&Bs, hotels, and vacation rentals, a range of accommodation options are available near Wabanaki communities. Larger hubs like Bar Harbor or Bangor offer a more diverse range of accommodations, whereas smaller, less touristy communities, such as those in Aroostook County, have fewer options. However, options are limited within Wabanaki communities themselves. Of the five Wabanaki communities, the Penobscot Nation is nearest to a concentration of accommodations outside tribal lands.

Some of the more popular Wabanaki-owned and -operated accommodation businesses include Bear Lodge in Motahkomikuk (Indian Township), Wilderness Pines Campground in Aroostook County, and the new Wolastoq Inn and Suites, a cozy microtel developed by the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians that celebrates Wabanaki cultures. There are some Wabanaki-owned hunting or fishing lodges and vacation rentals, such as the Milliken House Bed & Breakfast in Eastport, just outside of Sipayik (Pleasant Point). There is currently no data about Wabanaki-owned accommodations and the economic impact they have, or could have, in Wabanaki communities.

The Wabanaki Nations are exploring the development of a multi use Wabanaki Cultural Resort near Orono, the University of Maine, and the Penobscot Nation. The development will be an economic boost and become a hub drawing people to the area and directing them to Wabanaki communities. The Penobscot Nation is also conducting feasibility studies of land south of the Tekakapimək Contact Station for the development of small cabins. The Mi'kmaq Nation is exploring the development of cabins to encourage more winter visitation during snowmobile season. Many opportunities of this sort exist, and Initiative 5.3 provides general guidance to support the development of accommodations by Wabanaki Nations.

## Initiative 5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options

### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–5 (Medium to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Provide guidance, resources, and technical support to Wabanaki Nations and businesses to facilitate and streamline the process of developing new accommodations.

#### Priority Actions

**5.3.1** Support feasibility studies and site assessments to identify potential locations for new accommodations, considering factors such as accessibility, environmental impact, cultural significance, and market demand.

- Conduct accommodation assessments to establish a baseline understanding of accommodation gaps and opportunities.
- Conduct market research and demand analysis to identify target markets, visitor preferences, and trends in accommodation preferences, informing the design and development of new lodging.
- Foster partnerships and collaboration between Wabanaki Nation communities, local municipalities, tourism organizations, public land agencies, private sector entities, and funding agencies to leverage resources and expertise.
- Engage with Wabanaki community members about the design, function, and purpose of new lodging development to ensure that new facilities reflect and celebrate Wabanaki heritage and traditions and the natural beauty of Wabanaki lands.

**5.3.2** Provide technical assistance, training, and capacity-building support to Wabanaki entrepreneurs, developers, and community members interested in developing new lodgings, including guidance on business planning, regulatory compliance, and sustainable design practices.

- Facilitate access to funding opportunities and financial assistance programs, including grants, loans, tax incentives, and public-private partnerships.
- Provide guidance and technical assistance to help developers navigate permitting processes such as zoning and regulatory requirements, land use restrictions, and building codes.

**5.3.3** Establish a monitoring and evaluation process to track the progress, impact, and effectiveness of lodging development initiatives, gathering feedback from stakeholders, visitors, and communities.

#### Implementation Partners

FDDC, Wabanaki Nation governments, businesses and entrepreneurs, cultural organizations and educators; local municipalities, counties, and regulatory agencies, Maine Department of Economic and Community Development, University of Maine and Husson University tourism and hospitality programs, tourism organizations such as chambers of commerce and industry associations, hospitality companies, developers, investors, and real estate firms, funding agencies, foundations, and financial institutions, Native Business Center, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Small Business Administration

#### Resources

- Quality assurance framework assessments
- Existing accommodation feasibility studies and impact assessments
- Wabanaki Nation and Maine state, county and municipal business and development resources, regulations, and policies
- Expert guidance from hospitality developers who have worked with Indigenous communities

### Initiative 5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options

#### Key Performance Indicators

- Number and quality of feasibility studies and site assessments conducted to identify potential locations for new lodging facilities within Wabanaki territories.
- Visitor satisfaction in the quality of accommodations, based on global standards.
- Extent of partnerships and collaborations fostered between Wabanaki Nations, local governments, tourism organizations, private sector entities, and funding agencies to support lodging development initiatives.
- Wabanaki community members' perceptions of the quality and cultural representation of new lodging facilities.

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Hotel Santa Fe \(Picurís Pueblo\)](#)
- [Cabins at Grand Canyon West \(Hualapai Tribe\)](#)
- [Top of the World Hotel \(Iñupiat Alaska Native\)](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

### 5.4 Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions

A tourism experience truly begins when a visitor has arrived at a destination. The feeling created should evoke the uniqueness of the people, place, and history of the community. Most Wabanaki communities have little in the way of signage or other indicators signaling to visitors that they have arrived in a destination. During plan development, stakeholders identified the need to create a more welcoming feel for Wabanaki communities to set the tone for the interesting and unique experiences available there. Projects to enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions will both improve visitors' satisfaction with their experiences and support Wabanaki community pride.



## Initiative 5.4: Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions

### Implementation Timeline: Years 4–5 (Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Implement projects that enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions.

#### Priority Actions

**5.5.1** Build iconic entry points in key Wabanaki communities to signal to visitors that they have arrived at the destination. The entry feature should have a theme and symbolize the community (e.g., a monument or mural specific to the community).

- Choose locations for entry point monuments/murals, such as community entrances, parks, and rest areas.
- Hold workshops with Wabanaki community members and artists to gather ideas for themes and design elements, ensuring an inclusive process.
- Invite Wabanaki artists to submit monument/mural designs with a focus on cultural representation, offering incentives such as monetary awards.
- Work with architects to create detailed design prototypes based on community input, including renderings and plans.
- Present prototypes to the community for feedback, adjust as needed, and obtain formal approval from Wabanaki leaders.
- Contract local builders or external experts, if needed, for construction and installation.
- Organize celebrations for the new entry points.

**5.5.2** Conduct community beautification projects to improve aesthetics and amenities and to create a sense of place in Wabanaki communities.

- Assess potential projects including the creation of public restrooms, street furniture, sidewalks, gardens or art installations
- Conduct community listening sessions to identify which projects would be of highest priority for community members
- Develop facilities that adhere to environmental impact regulations and dark-sky lighting standards; features to consider will vary by community but could include any of the following:
  - Monuments at entry points highlighting a significant part of the community's history
  - Public restrooms
  - Improved sidewalks
  - Landscaping
  - Street furniture
  - Lighting
  - Garbage receptacles
  - Improved architectural facades
  - Dedicated vending area with seating

#### Implementation Partners

Wabanaki artists, designers, cultural educators, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki businesses and organizations, Wabanaki community members (youth and elders), foundations and nonprofit organizations (e.g., Native Arts and Cultures Foundation), Maine Arts Commission, contracted developers for design and construction, landscape architects and gardeners, and land and city planners

**Initiative 5.4: Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions****Resources**

- Assessments of previous and current community improvement projects
- Funding sources, including loans and grants
- In-kind support for gathering stakeholders to hold visioning and planning workshops
- Community Resilience Partnership

**Key Performance Indicators**

- Number of iconic entry points built in Wabanaki communities that represent the unique themes and symbols of their respective communities.
- Measurement of the extent to which the entry points attract attention and stimulate discussion about elements unique to each place.
- Number of community beautification projects completed to improve aesthetics and amenities in Wabanaki communities.
- Level of satisfaction and positive feedback from Wabanaki community members about new entry points.

**Case Studies for Inspiration**

- [Wabanaki Community Gardens](#)
- [Akwasasne Restoration Project](#)



Courtesy of Lisa Therrien



## Goal 6

Develop a Wabanaki Tourism brand and increase awareness of Wabanaki experiences and events

### Strategic Initiatives

- 6.1 Develop a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and marketing strategy.
- 6.2 Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide.
- 6.3 Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism.
- 6.4 Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members.

Goal 6 aims to elevate and promote Wabanaki Tourism by creating a distinct brand identity and enhancing its visibility. A distinct and highly visible brand identity will elevate and promote Wabanaki tourism. Goal 6 aims to create a Wabanaki Tourism brand to promote the unique cultural experiences offered by Wabanaki guides and attractions. Specially created digital collateral and a dedicated website will provide a means of engaging potential visitors and giving them comprehensive information about Wabanaki cultures, heritage, and tourism opportunities.

Collaboration with the MOT will further extend the reach of Wabanaki Tourism initiatives by tapping into broader promotional channels and markets. Training in marketing and promotion strategies will empower Wabanaki communities to effectively communicate their stories and attract visitors, thereby contributing to economic growth and cultural preservation.

### Measuring Success

Key measures of success are outlined below.

1. Active involvement of Wabanaki community members in developing a brand identity based on Wabanaki community values, culture, traditions, and heritage.
2. Integration of Wabanaki Tourism promotional content on the Visit Maine website and in marketing campaigns.
3. Positive feedback from Wabanaki community members about the brand design elements and the brand’s use in digital and print resources.
4. Positive testimonials, good reviews, and a higher rate of repeat visitation from individuals who have visited Wabanaki communities and attractions.





Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

## 6.1 Develop a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and marketing strategy

To celebrate the rich tapestry of Wabanaki cultures and heritage, this initiative outlines actions to develop and launch a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and a comprehensive marketing strategy. Wabanaki leadership and community input will be essential to developing a collective brand identity that highlights the unique qualities and cultures of each Wabanaki Nation and is based on community values. A well-crafted and compelling brand narrative and strategic marketing approach will amplify awareness, increase engagement, and encourage visitation to Wabanaki businesses, attractions, and communities. This initiative will also provide a strong foundation for the creation of a Wabanaki tourism website, marketing campaigns, and promotion materials.

An important aspect of developing a brand identity will be defining what “cultural tourism” means for Wabanaki communities and businesses. This will encourage partners such as the MOT to refer to Wabanaki cultural tourism appropriately and identify collaborative opportunities to promote cultural tourism experiences.

This initiative is further supported by initiatives that outline partnership opportunities to responsibly promote Wabanaki Tourism. State and local partners such as the MOT, Maine Tourism Association, Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival, and Abbe Museum, as well as national organizations such as AIANTA, Brand USA, and the U.S. Travel Association, can provide meaningful support, amplifying the reach and resonance of Wabanaki marketing and promotion.

### Initiative 6.1: Develop a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and marketing strategy

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 1–3 (Short- to Medium-Term)

##### Objective

1. Create a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand based on the cultures, traditions, and values of Wabanaki communities in Maine.
2. Create a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes digital, print, and experiential channels and will effectively promote Wabanaki tourism offerings and increase economic benefits to Wabanaki communities, businesses, and organizations.

## Initiative 6.1: Develop a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand and marketing strategy

### Priority Actions

**6.1.1** Support the development of a unique brand identity with input from Wabanaki leadership and community members.

- Secure funding for the development of a brand identity and marketing strategy.
- Create a Request for Proposals to hire a marketing agency that has experience working with Native American communities to facilitate the process of creating a brand identity, including but not limited to a logo, design elements, and branding guidelines.
- Create a project steering committee to oversee the brand development project to ensure Wabanaki cultural elements are used appropriately, intellectual property rights are evident and upheld, and there is good engagement from all Wabanaki communities.
- Host community listening sessions to identify core community values and to define what “cultural tourism” means as the foundation of a “Wabanaki Tourism” brand identity.
- Hold a series of meetings with all interested Wabanaki stakeholders to present potential brand design elements and hear feedback that will inform creation of a logo and brand guidelines.

**6.1.2** Enable the creation of a marketing strategy that outlines the use of digital, print, and other promotional activities.

- Collaborate with the MOT, AIANTA, and trusted industry partners to identify key target markets and segments based on demographics, interests, and travel preferences.
- Identify opportunities to use digital platforms (website, social media, email marketing), print materials (brochures, posters, signage), experiences (events, cultural festivals), and other nontraditional forms of marketing.
- Allocate resources and budget effectively across different marketing channels and functions, including communications and public relations, to maximize reach and impact.
- Coordinate with local and regional tourism partners, including the MOT, to amplify marketing efforts and leverage existing promotional channels.
- Monitor and analyze marketing performance metrics regularly to measure the effectiveness of the marketing plan and make adjustments as needed to optimize results.

### Implementation Partners

FDDC staff and cultural tourism fellows, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki tourism organizations, businesses, and entrepreneurs, Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival, Wabanaki community members, including artists, culture keepers/educators, elders, and youth, MOT, Maine Tourism Association, AIANTA, and contracted marketing agency (e.g., the marketing firm currently working with the Penobscot Nation to create a marketing plan)

### Resources

- Funding for brand and strategy development
- Maine visitor profile studies conducted by the MOT and AIANTA
- Advice from Tribal Nations who have developed a brand identity and marketing strategy
- Traditional design elements that represent Wabanaki communities
- Values and guiding principles identified as part of the plan development process

### Key Performance Indicators

- Number and quality of community listening sessions and stakeholder meetings
- Approval rating of potential brand design elements presented to Wabanaki community stakeholders
- Metrics such as website traffic, social media engagement, email open rates, and event attendance to evaluate the effectiveness of the marketing plan once implemented

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Akwasasne Travel](#)
- [Destination Indigenous Canada](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism

## **6.2 Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide**

Initiative 6.2 outlines steps to establish and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide—an important function of the marketing strategy. Online platforms are the primary gateways to information and brand engagement for modern travelers, and this initiative recognizes the critical importance of an informative and engaging digital presence for successful promotion of Wabanaki tourism. Having an up-to-date and intuitive website and visitor guide will give visitors immersive insights into Wabanaki communities and lands, fostering curiosity, connection, and ultimately visitation.

## Initiative 6.2: Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide

### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–3 (Medium-Term)

#### Objective

1. Design and maintain a user-friendly website for Wabanaki Tourism that provides seamless navigation, relevant content, and interactive features to enhance visitor engagement and encourage responsible exploration of Wabanaki lands and communities.
2. Develop an engaging and informative visitor guide (digital and print) that showcases the diverse cultural heritage, attractions, and experiences available in Wabanaki communities.

#### Priority Actions

##### 6.2.1 Design, develop, and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website.

- Secure funding and develop a Request for Proposals to contract a website developer or marketing agency to the website.
- Research best practices for user-friendly website design, particularly focusing on navigation, accessibility, and responsiveness.
- Create a project steering committee (could be the same committee as for initiative 6.1) to oversee the website development project to ensure Wabanaki cultural elements are used appropriately and intellectual property rights are respected.
- Collaborate with web developers and designers to create a visually appealing and intuitive website layout that prioritizes ease of use and seamless navigation and aligns with the Wabanaki Tourism brand identity.
- Collaborate with Wabanaki artists, creatives, and culture keepers/educators to oversee the integration of Wabanaki cultural design elements and language throughout the website.
- Incorporate interactive features such as maps, photo galleries, and virtual tours to enhance visitor engagement and facilitate respectful exploration of Wabanaki lands and communities.
- Ensure that the website is optimized for a wide range of modern devices and browsers to accommodate a diverse range of users.
- Train interested entrepreneurs in website development and maintenance.

##### 6.2.2 In alignment with the website, create a visitor guide (print and digital) featuring Wabanaki attractions and experiences.

- Review the Wabanaki Tourism Asset Inventory and validate information on Wabanaki attractions, events, and experiences from local sources and community members.
- Plan the guide's structure, including sections like destinations, cultural experiences, and practical information (e.g., maps, contacts).
- Write descriptions and gather or produce high-quality images, maps, and illustrations that accurately and respectfully portray Wabanaki cultures.
- Create, or contract for the creation of, a professional layout that balances aesthetics with easy navigation and readability in both print and digital formats.
- Print copies for local distribution and upload the digital version to relevant websites. Promote through social media, tourism boards, and community channels.

##### 6.2.3 Curate a digital resource library.

- Compile a comprehensive collection of digital resources such as articles, videos, photos, and interactive content; ensure that all assets include appropriate owner/author attributions.
- Work closely with Wabanaki community members, cultural experts, and historians to ensure the accuracy and authenticity of the content and approval for use of any content.
- Organize the digital resources into easily navigated categories or sections to facilitate user exploration and discovery.
- Implement a system for regularly updating and expanding the digital resource library to keep the content fresh and relevant to visitors.

## Initiative 6.2: Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide

### Implementation Partners

FDDC staff and cultural tourism fellows, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki tourism organizations, businesses, and entrepreneurs, Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival, Wabanaki community members, including artists, culture keepers/educators, elders, and youth, MOT, and a contracted website developer/marketing agency

### Resources

- Sustainable funding source to fund the development and long-term maintenance of the website, visitor guide, and digital content library
- Advice from Tribal Nations who have developed a travel website and visitor guide
- Wabanaki Tourism brand identity design elements and resources (see 6.1)

### Key Performance Indicators

- Website traffic metrics such as unique visitors, page views, and session duration to assess visitor engagement and reach
- Website performance across different devices and browsers to ensure optimal user experience
- Feedback from Wabanaki stakeholders about the quality of experience and content on the website, ensuring appropriate representation throughout
- Number of resources compiled, including articles, videos, photos, and interactive content, to ensure the library's comprehensiveness
- Number of visitors who cite the website and/or visitor guide as the source of information for trip planning

### Case Studies for Inspiration

- [Akwasasne Travel](#)
- [Destination Indigenous Canada](#)
- [Māori Tourism](#)
- [Seneca-Iroquois National Museum](#)
- [Nez Percé Tourism](#)
- [Visit Cherokee Nation](#)



Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism



## 6.3 Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism

Initiative 6.3 entails fostering a collaborative partnership with the MOT and industry partners to amplify the promotion of Wabanaki tourism. By leveraging the resources and networks of the MOT and other destination marketing organizations, this collaboration can expand the reach and visibility of Wabanaki cultural experiences and attractions. Through joint marketing campaigns, promotional events, and cross-promotional efforts, the proposed partnership would showcase the unique offerings of Wabanaki communities and encourage visitation to these culturally rich destinations. This initiative underscores a commitment to support and partnership in promoting responsible and sustainable tourism within Wabanaki communities.

### Initiative 6.3: Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism

#### Implementation Timeline: Years 2–5 (Medium to Long-Term)

##### Objective

1. Establish a collaborative framework with the MOT and industry partners to facilitate joint marketing and promotional efforts for Wabanaki Tourism.
2. Enhance the visibility and awareness of Wabanaki cultural experiences and attractions through collaborative promotional activities.

##### Priority Actions

#### 6.3.1 Establish a collaborative framework with the MOT and industry partners.

- Host discussions between Wabanaki tourism leaders and key stakeholders from the MOT to explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Define roles, responsibilities, and objectives for both parties within the collaborative framework, ensuring clarity of leadership and support roles for all aspects of work.
- Formalize the collaboration through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or partnership agreement.
- Establish regular communication channels and coordination mechanisms to ensure effective collaboration and information sharing.
- Discuss partnership opportunities with additional destination marketing partners such as relevant Maine travel regions, the Maine Tourism Association, AIANTA, Brand USA, and the US Travel Association.

#### 6.3.2 Identify opportunities for joint marketing and promotional activities.

- Identify key Wabanaki cultural experiences, attractions, and events to be featured in joint marketing campaigns.
- Develop collaborative promotional materials such as brochures, videos, and social media posts highlighting Wabanaki tourism offerings.
- Coordinate participation in trade shows, tourism fairs, and other industry events to promote Wabanaki tourism.
- Leverage digital platforms and social media channels to amplify the reach and impact of collaborative promotional activities.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of joint marketing efforts through metrics such as website traffic, social media engagement, and visitor feedback to inform future promotional strategies.

**6.3.3** Create an industry toolkit that includes essential information to accurately portray Wabanaki communities and cultures. The toolkit would include names and language considerations, geographical and cultural information, descriptions about traditions and customs, and provide guidance on how to share information about Wabanaki cultural tourism attractions and experiences. The Ma'ema'e Toolkit in Hawaii is an excellent example of an industry guidance toolkit.

##### Implementation Partners

MOT, FDDC, Maine travel regions, Maine Tourism Association, National Tour Association, NaviTour, Wabanaki Nation governments, Wabanaki tourism businesses and organizations, Wabanaki community members, Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival, and knowledgeable individuals or consultants who understand and respect Wabanaki cultures and traditions

### Initiative 6.3: Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism

#### Resources

- Wabanaki Alliance Media and Style Guide
- Representatives from Wabanaki tourism leadership
- Key stakeholders from the MOT
- Wabanaki legal advisors or experts in partnership agreements, if necessary
- Venue for hosting discussions and meetings
- Budget for legal consultation or drafting of the MOU/partnership agreement
- Funding for the development of collaborative promotional materials (brochures, videos) and participation in trade shows and tourism events (booth rental, travel expenses)
- Tools for tracking and evaluating marketing metrics (website analytics tools, social media monitoring tools, etc.)
- Real Maine Promotions Program

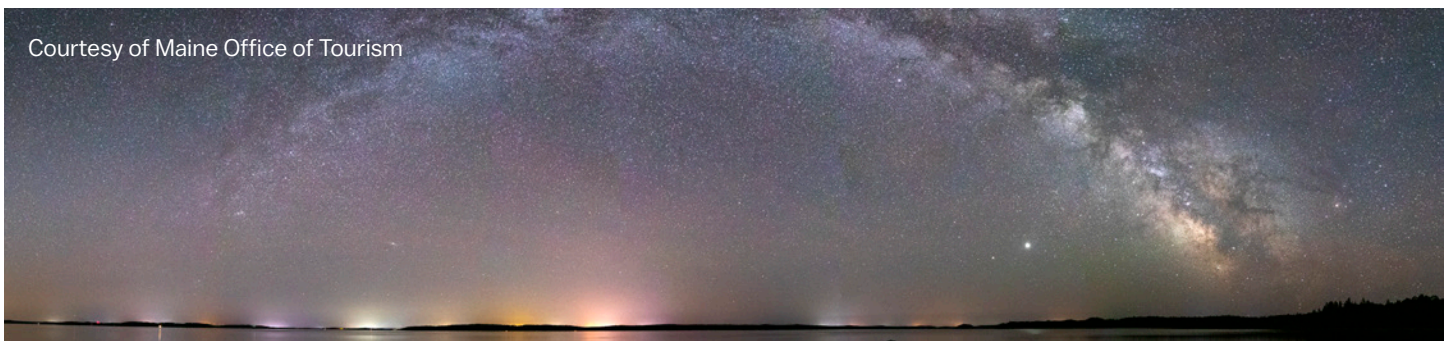
#### Key Performance Indicators

- Number of new collaborative marketing campaigns featuring Wabanaki cultural experiences, attractions, and events
- Visitation numbers and economic impact in Wabanaki communities or at Wabanaki attractions
- Number of trade shows, tourism fairs, and other industry events where Wabanaki tourism is promoted
- Website traffic, social media engagement, and follower growth numbers
- Satisfaction levels of Wabanaki tourism leaders regarding the collaboration and its outcomes

#### Case Studies for Inspiration

- New Mexico Tribal Nations and the State of New Mexico
- South Dakota Native Tourism Alliance partnership with the South Dakota Department of Tourism (e.g., visitor guide and website content development, trade shows and state tourism conference registration support)
- [Ma'ema'e Hawai'i Style and Resource Toolkit](#)

Courtesy of Maine Office of Tourism



## 6.4 Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members

In today's rapidly evolving tourism landscape, tourism businesses and organizations must have the skills, experience, and confidence to directly promote and market their tourism experiences and offerings through a variety of communication channels. This initiative outlines actions to help Wabanaki tourism businesses and organizations learn about available resources and ways to share their work with a broader audience. These actions include tailored educational programs and resource materials that equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to develop and implement successful marketing strategies on their own and in collaboration with others.

## Initiative 6.4: Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members

### Implementation Timeline: Years 3–5 (Medium- to Long-Term)

#### Objective

1. Create training modules and workshops specifically designed to address the marketing and promotion needs of Wabanaki tourism stakeholders, covering topics such as branding, digital marketing, social media strategy, and customer engagement.
2. Develop a library of resources, including guides, templates, and case studies, to provide practical guidance and support to Wabanaki individuals and organizations in their marketing and promotion efforts.

#### Priority Actions

**6.4.1** Collaborate with tourism industry, business training, and education institutions to develop a training program specifically designed for Wabanaki tourism stakeholders, to help them learn about tools and skills for marketing and promotion.

- Partner with tourism and education institutions to create a marketing and promotion training program for Wabanaki tourism stakeholders.
- Identify specific skills and education topics in marketing and promotion for Wabanaki tourism stakeholders; hold meetings/workshops to collect input from Wabanaki stakeholders on their training needs.
- Select institutions with expertise in tourism marketing that understand Wabanaki cultures.
- Decide on the best format for the training (in-person, online, or hybrid).
- Collaborate with chosen institutions to design a tailored training program based on identified needs.
- Test the training program with a small group of stakeholders and refine it based on feedback.
- Implement the training program and make it accessible to all interested Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members.
- Monitor the training's impact using feedback and performance metrics.

**6.4.2** Sponsor Wabanaki tourism stakeholders to participate in online and in-person learning opportunities so they can continue advancing their skills and experience.

- Research and identify online courses, workshops, conferences, and other learning opportunities (e.g., annual American Indigenous Tourism Conference).
- Develop and promote a sponsorship program outlining criteria, application process, and funding available to help individuals participate in learning opportunities.
- Provide logistical support and resources to sponsored individuals to facilitate their participation in the chosen learning opportunities, including registration fees, travel expenses, and accommodations if necessary.
- Encourage sponsored individuals to share their learnings and insights with peers and the broader community through presentations, workshops, articles, or social media posts.

**6.4.3** Facilitate mentoring opportunities for interested Wabanaki tourism stakeholders to learn about marketing and promotion firsthand with established industry professionals in Maine and in other Native American communities.

- With support from organizations such as AIANTA, identify established tourism professionals in Maine and other Native American communities to mentor Wabanaki participants.
- Develop a structured mentorship program framework outlining the objectives, expectations, and duration of the mentorship relationships.
- Advertise the mentorship opportunities to potential mentors and mentees.
- Match mentors with mentees based on factors such as expertise, interests, and compatibility.
- Provide resources, tools, and support materials to both mentors and mentees to facilitate learning and skill development.
- Monitor the progress of mentorship relationships and provide feedback to mentors and mentees to help them make the most of their mentorship experience.
- Organize networking events, workshops, or group sessions where mentors and mentees can interact, share experiences, and learn from each other in a supportive environment.

**Initiative 6.4: Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki entrepreneurs and community members****Implementation Partners**

FDDC staff and community tourism fellows, Wabanaki community leaders and educators, Maine and Wabanaki tourism industry experts, MOT, Thoreau-Wabanaki Trail Festival, and AIANTA

**Resources**

- Funding for participant stipends to participate in trainings, courses, and mentorship programs
- Online resources for virtual meetings; in-person venues for events and meet-ups
- Researched materials to inform training programs

**Key Performance Indicators**

- Number of participants in training programs, education courses, and mentoring experiences
- Feedback from participants on the quality of their learning experience
- Number and quality of Wabanaki-curated websites, promotional materials, and marketing campaigns
- Economic impact and visitation numbers after participants incorporate new learning into marketing and promotion efforts

**Case Studies for Inspiration**

- [AIANTA Go International Training and Conference](#)
- [Indigenous Tourism British Columbia Training and Workshops](#)
- [George Washington University & AIANTA Professional Certificate Program in Cultural Heritage Tourism](#)





## **5. Governance & Implementation Plan**

### **Are we getting there?**

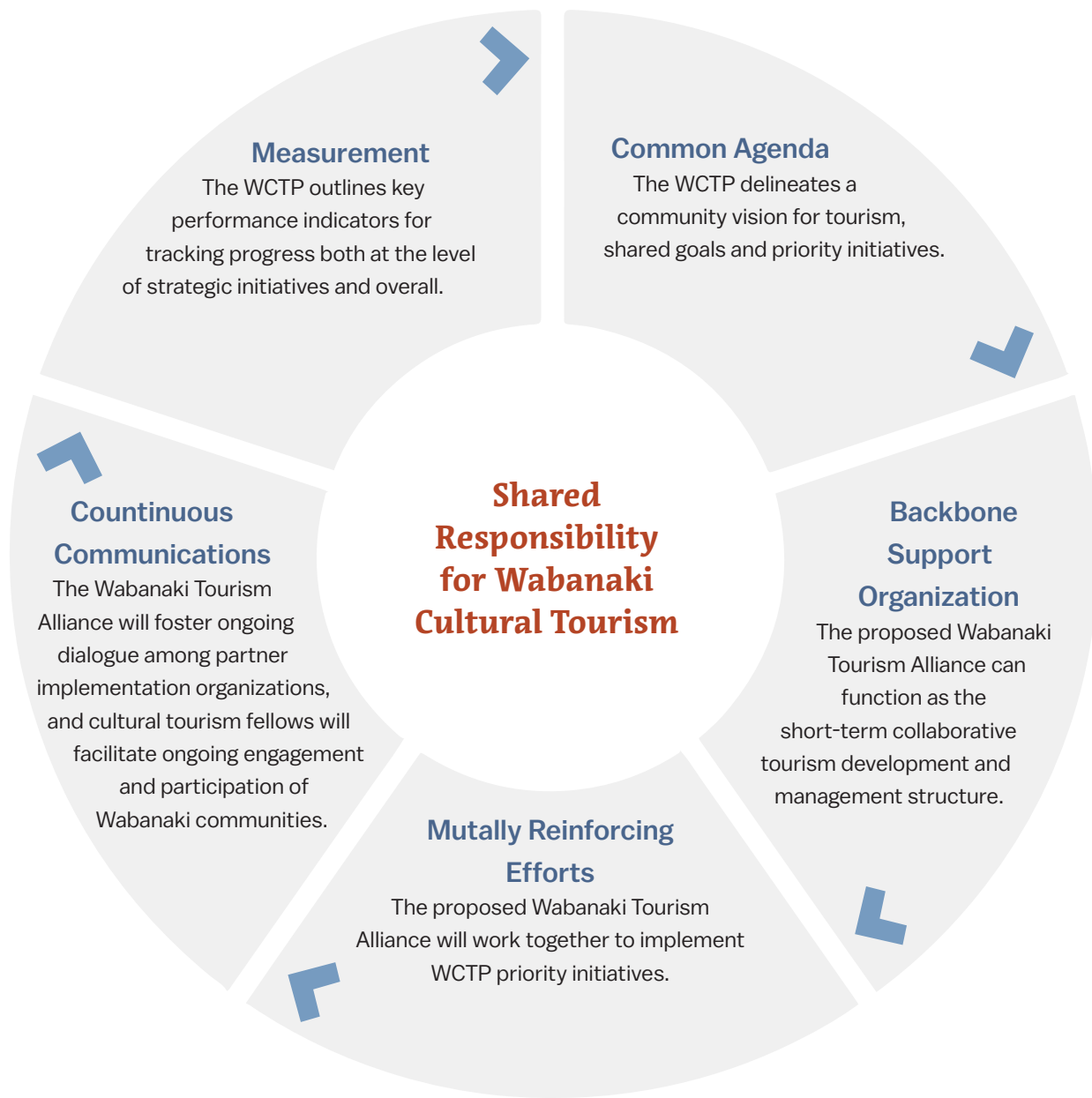
This section of the report provides an overview of the proposed implementation schedule for priority initiatives. It also provides additional information to guide further community discussions on the possible governance options for collaborative implementation of the WCTP.



## Shared Responsibility for Implementation

This WCTP serves as a framework that outlines a common agenda, shared vision, goals, and strategic initiatives that aim to inspire mutually reinforcing efforts and continuous communication across all Wabanaki communities.

Plan implementation is a shared responsibility among all key stakeholder groups—tribal governments and state partners, tourism businesses, Native and non-Native community organizations, and the wider Wabanaki communities. Collective action and impact are necessary to successful implementation of the WCTP. As depicted in the diagram below, the WCTP offers clear guidance addressing all five critical conditions for collaborative development and management of tourism and collective impact: a common agenda, a backbone support organization, mutually reinforcing efforts, continuous communications and measurement.



Successful WCTP implementation depends on establishing an interim and permanent governance structure for collaborative advancement of cultural tourism underpins successful WCTP implementation. The following diagram illustrates how the interim and permanent structures can interact and build on each other.

## REGIONAL ACTION

### Wabanaki Nations work together to provide strategic leadership and lead plan implementation

Wabanaki Tourism Alliance (WTA) – This proposed ad hoc network would be led by Wabanaki tribal and community leaders from each nation, and composed of Wabanaki community organizations and businesses, key state partners such as MOT, public land managers, and tourism industry partners. This network can serve as an interim structure for collaborative development and management of Wabanaki tourism. It should serve as a bridge between the current situation and a permanent collaborative tourism development and management structure to be defined over the first year or two of plan implementation.

## LOCAL ACTION

### Wabanaki Nations build local capacity for advancement of cultural tourism

Cultural tourism fellows hired in each Wabanaki Nation will work alongside Wabanaki tourism ambassadors recruited and trained from within Wabanaki communities. Cultural tourism fellows will support ongoing dialogue about tourism in their respective communities to ensure broad understanding of the full impacts of tourism, and will seek community input and involvement in all phases of plan implementation efforts. Cultural tourism fellows will also assess the feasibility of, and where appropriate will outline plans for, establishing Wabanaki tourism programs in Wabanaki communities.

## Implementation Schedule

The following implementation schedule provides a suggested timeline for the rollout of the strategic initiatives. Because many strategic initiatives are interrelated, a phased approach to implementation is recommended. The timelines may need to be adjusted to align with the actual launch of the proposed Wabanaki Tourism Alliance (the proposed collaborative plan implementation structure).



Goals	Strategic Initiatives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>1. Maintain collaborative tourism management and plan implementation.</b>	1.1 Establish a regional learning-action network to facilitate collaborative development and management of tourism.					
	1.2 Build local capacity for tourism within the Wabanaki Nations.					
	1.3 Develop a tourism monitoring system to track tourism activities and their impacts in Wabanaki Nations.					
	1.4 Establish a long-term tourism management structure to ensure sustainable advancement of cultural tourism.					
<b>2. Foster community engagement and support for Wabanaki tourism.</b>	2.1 Facilitate ongoing community engagement activities within Wabanaki Nations.					
	2.2 Enhance tribal councils' understanding of and collaboration on tourism initiatives.					
	2.3 Offer educational programs about Wabanaki Nations and their tourism efforts to tourism operators and frontline personnel across Maine.					
<b>3. Support entrepreneurship and the market readiness of tourism businesses.</b>	3.1 Support Wabanaki entrepreneurs in launching and growing tourism businesses.					
	3.2 Develop and implement standards for Wabanaki tourism operators.					
	3.3 Equip Wabanaki tourism operators with the skills to engage effectively with the travel trade for sales and marketing purposes.					
<b>4. Create and deliver Wabanaki cultural experiences.</b>	4.1 Train entrepreneurs to develop cultural tourism experiences.					
	4.2 Increase the number of trained and certified Wabanaki tour guides.					
	4.3 Create and promote visitor etiquette guidelines.					
	4.4 Develop Wabanaki cultural tour itineraries along travel routes.					
<b>5. Enhance wayfinding and placemaking.</b>	5.1 Create and share Wabanaki tourism wayfinding resources.					
	5.2 Provide direction for the development of new visitor infrastructure, facilities, and attractions.					
	5.3 Promote the development of Wabanaki-owned accommodation options					
	5.4 Enhance the welcoming feel of Wabanaki communities and priority attractions.					
<b>6. Develop a Wabanaki Tourism brand and increase awareness of Wabanaki experiences and events.</b>	6.1 Develop a "Wabanaki Tourism" brand and marketing strategy.					
	6.2 Create and maintain a Wabanaki Tourism website and visitor guide.					
	6.3 Collaborate with the MOT and partners to promote Wabanaki tourism.					
	6.4 Provide marketing and promotion training and resources to Wabanaki community members.					



