

HERITAGE CENTRE SUSTAINABILITY

Online Resource Manual

to assist organizations in the sustainable development and management of small-scale heritage centres



Prepared by the Quebec Labrador Foundation
www.qlf.org



Rowsell House Interpretation Centre, Harrington



Whiteley Museum, St. Paul's River



Middle Bay Interpretation Centre, Middle Bay



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Sustainable Heritage Centres
RESOURCE MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Heritage Centres: Being Small - the Challenge IS the Opportunity!

Almost by definition, small-scale heritage centres share a common set of challenges associated with their scale. Their small size can limit access to resources, including funding and staff, as well as the scope of what they can interpret. Many people working in small-scale heritage centres can become frustrated, and perceive the small scale at which they operate as a threat to the sustainability of their centre.

However, while being small does pose certain challenges, it also presents a wonderful set of opportunities. Small-scale heritage centres are fascinating and worthwhile precisely because they are small: there are no two alike! Each centre tells its own story, and is uniquely rooted in the people and place of its community. Smaller operations tend to be more manageable in terms of space, money and time. These centres most often draw people who are passionate about its topics, thereby contributing to its volunteer base, management and overall success. Typically, a small centre means a combination of dedicated people, deeply rooted in their community and its history, along with a story (or stories) that warrant being shared with the rest of the world. There is much potential for small-scale heritage centres, if developed, managed and promoted in a sustainable manner.



Purpose of Manual

QLF has been working with heritage centres for more than 15 years in several communities across the Quebec Lower North Shore, Labrador, and Newfoundland. Through these partnerships, we have both witnessed and experienced the various challenges that are most important to the long-term viability of small-scale museums, interpretation and welcoming centres. Most recently, following a series of QLF workshops in the Eastern Townships and Lower North Shore of Quebec, there was a demonstrated need to develop a collection of on-line resources that could assist groups or individuals in their heritage preservation and development efforts.

As such, this manual consolidates valuable information regarding the various elements that contribute to heritage centre sustainability. In this manner, it provides direct links to on-line resources that demonstrate how to capitalize on the unique qualities of such centres, and presents a host of creative ideas about how to overcome the associated challenges. It is intended for anyone involved in planning or running a small-scale heritage centre.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Small-scale heritage centres play several critical roles on the Canadian social, cultural and economic stage. On a more local level, heritage establishments contribute to the preservation and development of a community's heritage and/or history. In various capacities, they enable people to become directly involved in capturing and sharing what it is that makes their 'story' unique, and in contributing to their community and/or region in a broader context.

Education: Heritage centres allow us to educate local, national and international visitors about the history of our communities. In this way, heritage centres promote inter-cultural dialogue and understanding. A centre can "tell the story" of a particular person, event, community, or region which capture aspects of local heritage that may otherwise not be recognized. Taken together, these centres encourage life-long learning, and share the story of both a region and a country.

Reflection and Identity: By allowing us to share our stories, heritage centres give us a rare opportunity to reflect on the profound ways in which our communities and our country have changed over time. Knowing *where we are coming from* helps us to understand *who we are*, and encourages us to re-examine *where we are going*. It allows local residents the opportunity to get directly involved, create awareness and develop a sense of pride for their rich culture, heritage and history. In this sense, heritage centres bring people together, which strengthens community identity and unity.



Economic Development: Heritage centres support community and regional development efforts. Not only do they generate local employment, but they draw tourists to the community and the region, generating associated economic benefits more broadly. Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and has the potential to help economically sustain rural communities. Like any similar venture, these centres should be treated like a business, thereby managed in a socially and economically feasible manner in order to reap the greatest benefits, and, in turn, offer the greatest possible service.

Community Support: Often, in smaller regions, the population can sometimes be too small to warrant keeping multiple community buildings open (community halls, old schools). In this way, heritage centres can play an additional role by serving as a multi-purpose area, beyond its heritage or tourism focus. A heritage centre should not replace other infrastructures, but in an area where some services are no longer available, these centres can build community support by hosting events and activities specifically for residents. Especially in the off-season, heritage centres can be the meeting point for local dinners, teas, workshops, meetings, and events. Just as long as the exhibits and artifacts are protected, these additional activities can contribute to its community support and sustainability.

Section 1: TOURISM & MARKET TRENDS

Introduction

To run a thriving heritage centre or to design a successful exhibit, it is important to identify your target audience. Are you aiming your services at families, school groups, baby boomers, travelling tourists, bus tours or local residents? These different kinds of visitors typically have different needs and expectations for their visit. You should therefore design your heritage centre and all exhibits with your target audience in mind.

Often, you will notice that there are multiple audiences to attend to – both locals and visitors. It is important to consider what this means in terms of attractions, exhibits and presentation. Locals tend to be drawn more to things they can relate to, or that strike an emotional chord or connection. This might mean having a section of the centre dedicated to issues surrounding local settlement, or something that focuses on local interest. This, in comparison, might not be as interesting to a visitor as an exhibit that demonstrates a key component of history or natural heritage. Either way, it is important to know that you will not necessarily have something for everyone, but based on those whom you would like to attract, it is critical to strike a healthy balance of information and service offered.

The past is often an excellent predictor of the future. By collecting basic information about visitors to your heritage centre, you will better understand who they are and can then adjust your centre's programming according to



their needs and expectations. This information can be collected in a number of ways, including visitor surveys, and is instrumental in allowing you to provide quality service based on who is visiting your site and what type of experience they are in search of.

One tourism trend that is currently gaining in popularity is *authentic experience tourism*. Increasingly, tourists expect not only to passively *see* things, but to actively *participate* in an adventure, so they are able to *experience* something unique in the place they visit. For instance, *authentic experience tourists* might enjoy learning how to make traditional crafts, taking part in local events, or having the opportunity to meet and talk with a local resident to learn about the region. If this is the case, your centre will only be appealing if it integrates one or more of these opportunities into its exhibit space.

However, “authentic experience” tourism is not appealing to all visitors; some prefer to see things and to be guided from one point of interest to another. Thus, it is important to know as much as possible about who your audience is in order to know which type of experience you should offer.



On-line resources to explore:

- **Who is Your Audience?**
<http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/steps/step3handouts/WholsYourAudience.pdf>
- **Understanding Your Visitors (Section1)**
<http://www.linkbc.ca/torc/downloads1/UnderstandVisitors.pdf>
- **Understanding Visitor Needs and Expectations**
<http://www.tourismexcellence.com.au/Understanding-Visitor-Needs/Introduction.html>
- **Types of Visitor Information to Collect (Section 2)**
<http://www.linkbc.ca/torc/downloads1/UnderstandVisitors.pdf>
- **Examples of Visitor Stats and Profiles:**
 - **Visitor Profiles (Nfld Labrador Exit Survey Results 2003-04)**
http://www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2006/2003_2004ExitSurvey.pdf
 - **Leisure Visitors: Vacation Attitudes, Perceptions and Experiences (2003-04)**
<http://www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2006/NonResidentFollowup.pdf>
 - **Quebec Source of Information on Global Tourism Trends**
<http://tourismintelligence.ca/category/trends/>
 - **Quebec Tourism Statistics (2009-10)**
<http://www.tourisme.gouv.qc.ca/publications/media/document/etudes-statistiques/recentes-donnees-juin-2011.pdf>
- **Discovering Heritage Tourism: Practical Ideas for the Tourism Industry**
http://www.corporate.canada.travel/docs/research_and_statistics/product_knowledge/DiscoveringHeritageTourismENG.pdf
- **Successful Tourism at Heritage Places**
<http://www.sustainabletourisonline.com/awms/Upload/Resource/bookshop/Succesful%20tourism%20at%20heritage%20places.pdf>
- **Examples of Authentic Tourism**
 - **Cape Race**
<http://www.caperace.com>
 - **New Zealand Creative Tourism**
<http://www.creativetourism.co.nz/>

Section 2: MANAGEMENT – Operational and Financial

Introduction

As the word ‘management’ entails many aspects of operating and maintaining a centre, the following section addresses feasibility, operational management (board, staff, planning, etc.) and financial management (budgets, fundraising, etc).

Feasibility

Although every community might like to have a centre to interpret and promote their history and heritage, it is often difficult for smaller regions to both develop and sustain a physical building for this purpose. Each community likely has a story to tell, but there are different ways in which to interpret heritage – a centre is not the only means. Before beginning such a venture, it is important to consider several factors. Is there enough traffic and activity in the region to warrant a heritage building? Is there a solid framework (material, financial and human resources) to both manage and sustain a centre? Beyond the scope of the community, is your story interesting or big enough to entice visitation in the long-term? Would the ‘story’ be better told through outdoor interpretation panels, community displays, local activities or promotional material? Is there an existing building that could incorporate the message or story that you are hoping to share?

Operating a heritage centre is not a small task. It requires extensive research, preparation, human resource capabilities, financial obligations and responsibility. It is therefore important to ensure that there is both support and a demonstrated need for a heritage centre before moving forward. Material, human and financial resources must be addressed, with a long-term plan for sustainability in place.



Operational Management

Strategic planning is key to successful management and essential to making your heritage centre sustainable. This process allows the centre’s leaders to collectively clarify the organizational mission and goals, to think about where the organization should be in one to five years, and to determine how these objectives will be reached. Strategic planning requires that you consider the following: Which activities and tasks will you undertake in order to fulfill your mission statement and achieve your goals? What will the timeframe for the completion of each activity and task be? By what criteria will you assess progress?

As part of this planning process, a SWOT analysis is often useful. A SWOT analysis involves assessing your organization's internal Strengths and Weaknesses and then gauging the Opportunities and Threats to it in your external environment.

Like any business, 'people' are key to the success of your heritage centre. It is of utmost importance that you have a strong board (advisory or administration) in place in order to provide direction, and ensure that staff members have people to whom they can turn for guidance and assistance.

A succession plan is essential to long-term management as well. Most of the time, there are just a few key people – sometimes just one person - running a heritage centre. Key people generally become remarkable repositories of information about the inner working of the centre, and indispensable to its smooth operations. The succession plan prepares an organization for the possibility that the key person/people must leave the organization for one



reason or another, and allows for a smooth transition to new leadership. Preparations must therefore be outlined to have several people playing key roles, and to have a process in which this information can be transferred in the event of their absence/departure.

Financial Management

Some people may think that non-profits don't need to design a budget because their goal as an organization is to support their community, not to make money. This is definitely not the case: proper financial management is important for any non-profit that wants to be sustainable in the long term. Like any for-profit business, heritage centres need to prepare and adhere to their budgets, to ensure continuity and success.

One of the biggest challenges facing any small group or centre is money: there seems to always be too few sources. It goes without saying that a heritage centre needs to capitalize on different sources of revenue in order to be sustainable. Revenue may be generated in part by charging visitors an entrance fee, but since you want to encourage visitation and cannot overcharge, this source alone is unlikely to keep your organization running. You may want to consider additional services needed in your area which complement your centre's goals, such as

a small canteen, craft store, or an internet access hub. This may attract visitors who would otherwise not drop by.

There are also many potential funders - federal, provincial, municipal or private - that are willing to support heritage and cultural projects. The following section of this manual provides useful tips on how to identify these potential grantors, and how to prepare and write a successful grant proposal. You have to be active as an organization to seek out what is available to you, but at the end of the day, you will likely have to rely on fundraising efforts as well.

As such, another way for non-profits to generate revenue is to organize fundraising activities. These activities contribute to your organization's financial health and are also great opportunities to connect with the community. Take a look at the last section of this chapter of the manual for original fundraising ideas!

On-line resources to explore:

- **Unique Nature & Struggles of Small Non-profits**
<http://www.sandra-larson-consulting.com/articles/Unique-Nature-and-Struggles-of-Traditional-Small-Nonprofits.htm>
- **Assessing Resources for Heritage Projects (Module 11)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Overview of Strategic Planning Models**
http://www.managementhelp.org/plan_dec/str_plan/models.htm
- **Strategic Planning: A Ten Step Guide**
http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPEIA/Resources/mosaica_10_steps.pdf
- **The Business and Marketing Plan (Module 8)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Identifying Potential Resources and Developing Effective Funding Proposals**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Guide for Writing a Funding Proposal**
<http://www.learnerassociates.net/proposal/hintsone.pdf>
- **Nonprofit Fundraising Demystified**
<http://www.raise-funds.com/2003/nonprofit-fund-raising-demystified/>
- **Master Grant Application Outline**
<http://www.nonprofitworks.com/downloads/default.asp>
- **Steps to Building an Effective Grant seeking Program**
<http://www.nonprofitworks.com/downloads/default.asp>
- **Fundraising Ideas**
<http://www.better-fundraising-ideas.com/charity-fundraising-ideas.html>
 - **Example of "Fundraiser of the month"**
<http://www.fundraiser.com/oct01/gift-wrapping.html>
- **Leadership Transition in Nonprofit Management**
http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/66081/leadership_transition_in_nonprofit.html?cat=48
- **Succession Planning**
http://www.help4nonprofits.com/NPLibrary/NP_Bd_SuccessionPlanning_Art.htm
- **Agency Assessment: Best Practices Checklist**
http://www.lakestolocks.com/downloads/6-13_imals_workshop.pdf (Last section of the document)

Section 3: INTERPRETATION & PROGRAMMING

Introduction

When determining the mandate or updating the contents of your heritage centre, aim to interpret topics that are significant to your community/region, and that are not being interpreted elsewhere. Your site should be ‘different’ in its theme, contents and approach in order to attract visitors. Make every possible effort to ensure that you are telling a unique story, ‘your’ story, and that it is presented in an intriguing manner. At the same time, there is such a thing as telling “too much of a story.” As an example, if your centre focuses on marine history, adding a sewing machine or collection of dishes that someone offers (however nice it may be), will not really “add” anything to your exhibit if it is not connected to your theme.

It is important to design your exhibit in a way that is attractive, interesting and fun for your targeted visitors. The ways in which you choose to convey historical facts could make them either dull or fascinating. When you write texts for your historical panels, try to write short, clear and informative texts. The aim is to offer a synthesis of the relevant information to visitors, not to write everything you know. Photos and artefacts make great additions to an exhibit, but must be properly identified, protected (in the case of artefacts) and related to the content of the exhibit.

However, informative panels and artefacts are not the only ways to tell a story. You should consider different approaches, according to your target audience. For instance, you might organize re-enactments during which staff members play the roles of historical characters. A guide could lead visitors through the area, pointing out its interesting features and curiosities. You could invite visitors to share an experience such as learning how to make crafts or a traditional meal. You could offer programming that encourages participation in a unique adventure that is integrated into the heritage centre setting. Keep in mind that a tourism ‘product’ is what you offer, but a tourism ‘experience’ is what is remembered.



The heritage centre’s guides play a key role in maintaining visitors’ interest. It is important that they establish a warm connection with visitors. Visitors should feel that their questions and comments are welcome and taken seriously. Guides should convey enthusiasm and, of course, should have enough knowledge about the topics covered by the exhibit to provide accurate

information. Visitors often do much of their research before they arrive at a destination; it is therefore particularly important that accurate information be provided at all times. Likewise, make sure front-line servers not only know about your centre, but about the surrounding area as well. The more a visitor has to do and see, the more time they will spend there, and the more everyone will benefit as a result.

On-line resources to explore:

- **Cultural Heritage Tourism**
<http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/steps/step3.htm>
- **Stewardship: Caring for Heritage Resources (Module 2)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Understanding Your Audience (Module 10)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Basic Interpretive Skills – The Course Manual**
 - **Responding to the Visitor (Information Sheet 14)**
 - **Our Role in Personal Interpretation (Information Sheet 15)**
 - **Remembering Facts by Mind Mapping (Information Sheet 16)**
 - **The Use of Wayside Exhibits (Information Sheet 23)**http://www.interp.de/dokumente/topas_course_manual.pdf
- **Steps to Developing an Interpretive Exhibit / Effective Displays (Module 10)**
 - **Interpretive Planning & Techniques**<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Writing Exhibit Labels**
<http://www.museumprofessionals.org/forum/member-articles/2424-writing-exhibit-labels.html>
- **Planning a Guided Walk**
http://www.sabonet.org.za/downloads/9_garden_come_alive/chapter_4.pdf
- **What Makes a Good Interactive Exhibit?**
<http://www.montshire.org/stacks/exhibits/goodexhibits.html>



Section 4: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, STAFFING & VOLUNTEERS

Introduction

A heritage centre cannot be sustainable if it does not have support from the local community. It is important that before you create your centre, you make sure that it responds to a real need and a real interest in your community. At all stages, including the initial planning process, take the time to meet with local residents, elected representatives, along with other heritage and cultural organizations in order to solicit their input about your project. People will be more willing to support your heritage centre if they feel that their ideas and concerns are valued and integrated.



Support from the community can come in many ways. Financial support is one manner, but surely not the only one. You may also consider in-kind support, which is assistance by way of supplies, facilities or human resources. For instance, people working at the public library may allow you to use a room for a meeting or for an exhibition. Regardless of what way residents are involved, it is important that they be consulted and feel connected to your site. Ideally, they will have a sense of pride and ownership, so that the centre becomes the community's and not just a group's. In many ways, local residents will be your best friend.

Most of the time, non-profit organizations have a small team of regular staff, and rely on volunteers to help carry out a large part of their projects and activities. Often, finding volunteers can be a challenge. In small communities, you may want to avoid asking too much of the same people all the time. You do not want to deter people from helping by overwhelming them. In the same respect, asking different people to get involved or help out will increase your volunteer circle, and may generate new interest in your centre.

Keep in mind that people will volunteer if they feel connected to a topic or cause. Reaching out to residents based on their interests will add to your efforts, outcomes and visitation. In the following section, you will find useful tips on how to undertake effective volunteer recruitment campaigns, how to appeal to potential volunteers and how to ensure that they enjoy their experience and are willing to stay involved over time.



The effective management of your organization’s staff is also a key to its sustainability. People are the heart of any venture, and a happy, well managed staff team is key to the success of your centre. As some of the first people that visitors meet, your front line staff members need to be courteous, welcoming, and well informed. They are often the “first impression” that will determine if people will stay and/or return. This section also addresses how to train your employees to provide visitors with excellent service and how to help maintain their levels of motivation. In addition to supporting volunteers and regular staff, board members can also be great ambassadors of your organization. One of their responsibilities is to raise awareness about your organization and to generate additional interest in, and support for, its work.

On-line resources to explore:

- **Interpretive Staff (Module 10)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Supporting Employee Motivation**
<http://www.managementhelp.org/mgmt/prsnlmt.htm#anchor776119>
- **7 Finishing Touches for your customer Service Strategy**
<http://www.inc.com/ss/7-finishing-touches-your-customer-service-strategy#0>
- **Volunteer Recruitment Campaigns**
http://www.casaforchildren.org/site/c.mtJSJ7MPiSE/b.5466361/k.4208/Volunteer_Recruitment_Campaigns.htm
- **Supporting, Recognizing and Challenging Volunteers**
<http://www.charityvillage.com/cv/research/rvol38.html>
- **Board Members as Ambassadors**
<http://www.cfnpe.org/eNewsletters/BMQBoardMembersasAmbassadors/tabid/395/Default.aspx>
- **Building Community Support for Heritage Projects (Module 5)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Nonprofit Organizations and Customer Service**
<http://www.managance.com/resources/media/NonProfitOrgsAndCustomerService.pdf>
- **How to Ensure Strong Customer Service and Customer Satisfaction**
<http://managementhelp.org/customers/service.htm>
- **Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards**
<http://www.boardsource.org/Knowledge.asp?ID=3.368>

Section 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Introduction

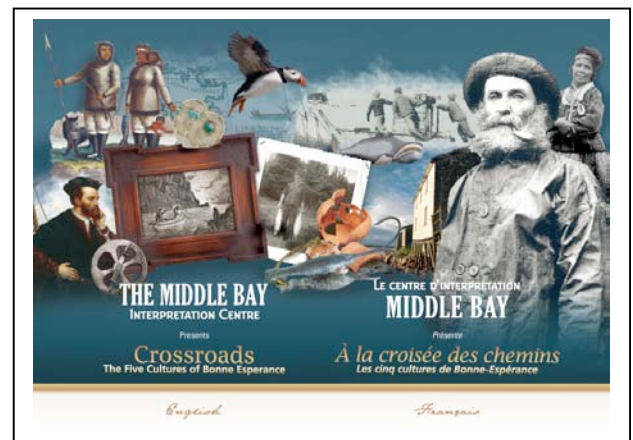
The term “marketing” is often loosely referred to as selling or promoting a product or service, based on the needs of the customer. However, marketing encompasses a much broader spectrum of detail. More often referred to as the “Marketing Mix,” there are at least six elements that must be evaluated in order to successfully meet the customers’ needs: Product (or service), Price, Promotion, People, Place, and Planning (the 6 P’s).

Each of these components plays a key role in determining whether or not your promotional efforts reach your target market. The “6 P’s” also demonstrate how successful you are in providing an appropriate “mix” that will attract and retain visitors. For example, the type and quality of product you offer will appeal to a certain audience, but if you over price it, you will deter visitation. Similarly, if you have the best promotion in the world, but distribute it in a place where your targeted audience will not see it, your efforts will not be effective. As a result, the “6 P’s” should be always considered together, as this will determine how people will perceive, and receive, information about your heritage centre.

In terms of promotion, a heritage centre, like any other service or product, needs to be advertised and made known in order to draw visitors. The appropriate method(s) will depend on several factors, including your location, products/services offered, and of course, your target market. Not every method will reach or target people in the same way.

You may promote your heritage centre through use of printed material (brochures, advertisements, signage), by sending press releases and ads to newspapers, TV or radio stations, by developing web-based materials or attending trade shows. Whatever the promotional tool that you use, be sure to deliver your message in a professional, creative and attractive way. Also, address your promotional efforts to those people who are most likely to visit your heritage centre (your target audience) – and via the channel of distribution that they are most likely to access.

In addition, consider that before going on a trip, many people search out information on the internet about where to stay, where to eat and which museums and sites to visit. If you want your heritage centre to be part of their planned trip, you should create a website that provides all the relevant information about your centre. To reach these planners, you should have your heritage centre included in general websites dedicated to the tourism industry in your region.



Social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube are an increasingly popular and accessible means of promotion these days. You should consider creating a Facebook page or Twitter account, which will allow you to keep people informed about your organization's news, activities and events. Other on-line resources such as Youtube, provide the opportunity to post videos showing a little bit of what your organization is involved in. Make sure also to link these social media with each other (you may, for example, include in your website a web link to your Facebook page). Update these sites regularly to maintain interest and to increase visitation through new pictures, messages, and information. Outdated material could do more harm than good toward your efforts.

Strong signage and its visibility/location are also important elements to consider in order for visitors to reach your heritage centre. Easy access to your site will make visitors start their visit on a positive note. In addition, some people may discover your centre by the sole virtue of signage, and may decide to stop by and see what is there. Of course, it is also important to be careful with signage in order to avoid ruining the landscapes and the beauty of your region. All signage must also comply with municipal and provincial laws.

Promotion should not be "one or the other" in terms of methods used. A solid marketing campaign will likely use many types of promotional materials together in order to reach the targeted audience(s). But again, the key here is in knowing exactly who you hope to attract and how best to reach them in order to make the most of your marketing resources.

On-line resources to explore:

- **Marketing in the Travel & Tourism Industry (Marketing Mix)**
<http://www.bized.co.uk/educators/16-19/tourism/marketing/lesson/marketing1.htm>
- **Promoting Your Heritage Facility & Programs (Module 9)**
<http://www.ahinl.ca/ahinl2/>
- **Developing a Promotional Strategy**
<http://web1.msue.msu.edu/imp/modtd/33710086.html>
- **Welcome! A Manual to Enhance Community Signage and Visitor Experience**
<http://web.viu.ca/trip/Signage%20manual.pdf>
- **Social Media Travel Marketing**
<http://arcres.com/Social-Media-Travel-Marketing.cfm>
- **Marketing Ideas for Small Museums**
<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art57687.asp>
- **Things to Remember When Promoting Tourism**
<http://www.howtodothings.com/business/how-to-promote-tourism>
- **Brochure Design Ideas**
<http://www.createyourmarket.com/brochure-design-ideas.html>
- **Market Value: 5 Steps to an Effective Museum Marketing Plan**
http://www.aam-us.org/pubs/mn/MN_JA99_EffectiveMarketingPlan.cfm
- **Social Networking for Personal and Organizational Networking and Marketing**
<http://managementhelp.org/socialnetworking/index.htm#anchor789>
- **Publicity Toolkit by Denton Publications**
http://www.lakestolocks.com/downloads/3-18_press_workshop_binder_revised_4-7.pdf

CONCLUSION

The success and sustainability of a heritage centre are dependent upon many factors: knowing your audience, establishing proper management, offering creative methods of interpretation relating to your unique 'story', involving the community, hosting a knowledgeable and welcoming staff, and promoting your site in an effective manner are just a few of the elements required. Each centre has a different focus, set of challenges and list of opportunities. It is up to the people who manage and run such an establishment to determine the best approach to be taken, based on the specific context.

However, there are common threads and ways in which sustaining a centre can be made easier. It begins with determining the main objective or goal of your centre – the story to be told, the heritage or history that requires interpretation. There should be a demonstrated 'need' for what you are offering. Once this is figured out, you have to determine if there is enough interest and



support from the community to manage and operate such a centre (along with a clearly defined management and financial plan). If so, you have to know who you are targeting based not only who you would 'like' to see visit the centre, but also upon the trends in your area and the expectations/interests of those you will rely on to come.

How you decide to interpret your information or story is key – it should not only represent something unique about your area, but reflect what visitors are seeking in terms of interest and experiences offered. Volunteers, management and staff must remain actively involved to ensure smooth operation and a welcoming, interesting and knowledgeable atmosphere. How you then promote these products and services should be based upon the targeted market's needs and accessibility. Make sure that you choose methods that best reach your audience and that best reflect what you are offering.

Last but not least, **ENJOY...**

A sustainable heritage centre will entail work, but planning ahead and feeling pride for what you have already accomplished will go a long way toward making it successful.

Best of luck!

