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OFFICE OF TOURISM

Way DownEast Region (*Machias, Calais, Lubec and Eastport*) Community Destination Academy (CDA) Case Study 2022-2023

The Community Destination Academy (CDA) is part of a program organized and delivered by a collaboration among the [Maine Office of Tourism](#) and the [Northern Forest Center](#). The CDA program has delivered destination development work in rural areas of Maine, including Moosehead Lake, Rangeley and the Bethel Area.

CDA Dates and Locations

- **March 15, 2022, Session 1:**
Cobscook Institute, Lubec, ME
- **April 26, 2022, Session 2:**
Cobscook Institute, Lubec, ME
- **May 16, 2022, Summit:**
Machias Savings Bank, Machias, ME



Facilitator

David Beurle, [Future iQ](#): David has worked extensively throughout Maine and New Hampshire with rural communities building long-term strategic direction.

Regional Impetus for CDA

For many years this group of service center communities in Washington County, ME - and communities between - have recognized the lack of certain critical infrastructure and amenities in each of their respective areas and sought to accommodate for deficiencies by collaborating region-wide to attract and accommodate visitors. In addition to the four major service centers and the smaller communities between, the region collaborates with Campobello Island, NB, Canada and the Passamaquoddy People on tourism related issues.

The Communities

Calais: The city of Calais has a population of just over 3,000 (2020 census) and three Canada–US [ports of entry](#) over the [St. Croix River](#) connecting to [St. Stephen, New Brunswick](#), Canada. Calais, a city of commerce, is the primary shopping center of eastern Washington County. Retail, service, and construction businesses are the primary components of the Calais economy.

This region was occupied for thousands of years by indigenous peoples. The historic [Passamaquoddy](#), an Algonquian-speaking people of the [Abenaki Confederacy](#), was predominant in this area at the time of European settlement. The St. Croix River and the surrounding area were first explored by the French [Samuel de Champlain](#) when he and his men spent a winter on [St. Croix Island](#) in 1604. ([Wikipedia](#))



Eastport: Eastport is a city and archipelago in the most northern part of Washington County. The population was 1,288 in the 2020 census. Eastport is home to the deepest natural port on the east coast which is also the nearest deep port to Europe. The Eastport Islands are in the Bay of Fundy, noted for some of the most powerful and extreme tides which keep the port ice-free in winter. (*City of Eastport website*)

Though fishing and ties to the sea are the mainstay of the Eastport economy, the community is known also for its vibrant arts scene, small town charm and natural beauty.

Lubec: Lubec is the easternmost municipality in the contiguous U.S. and is the country's closest continental location to Africa. Quoddy Head Lighthouse is located near Lubec and noted to be the first location in North America to see the first morning light of the sun. The town, with a population of 1,237 (2020 census), is home to Quoddy Head State Park. Lubec is the access point to Campobello Island, home to the Roosevelt summer residence and popular US/Canadian tourist attraction. ([Wikipedia](#))

Machias: Machias, the county seat, and home to the University of Maine at Machias and Machias Valley Airport, has a town population of 2,060 (2020 census). The word Machias in the Passamaquoddy language means “bad little falls”, which is representative of the beautiful, rugged waterfalls located on the Machias River in the center of the community. (*Town of Machias website*)



The CDA Process and Actions

Early Priorities Established:

In early CDA discussions three key priorities and actions emerged:

1. A significant desire to collaborate across the region
2. The opportunity to build unique nature-based tourism economic activities
3. A desire to focus on youth retention and building community prosperity



Themes:

Throughout the discussions, the recurring themes were to:

- Develop Nature-Based Tourism – Marine and Land based
- Build Entrepreneurial Options – especially in Outdoor Recreation
- Recognize the Diversity of Tourism Jobs – Range of potential Vocations and Business Growth
- Train Youth About the Existing Opportunities to Stay – Build Prosperity and Careers

The Process:

Sustainable Tourism Approach

A sustainable approach to tourism was deemed important to all participants. That approach will address balancing the growth of the tourism industry with the social impact on residents. The desired outcomes are:

- Integrate tourism with local community in a respectful and functional way
- Provide authentic visitor experiences grounded in local reality
- Create lasting social and financial benefits for locals
- Support with public policies, organizational support and funding
- Activities should contribute to the health and vibrancy of the natural environment.

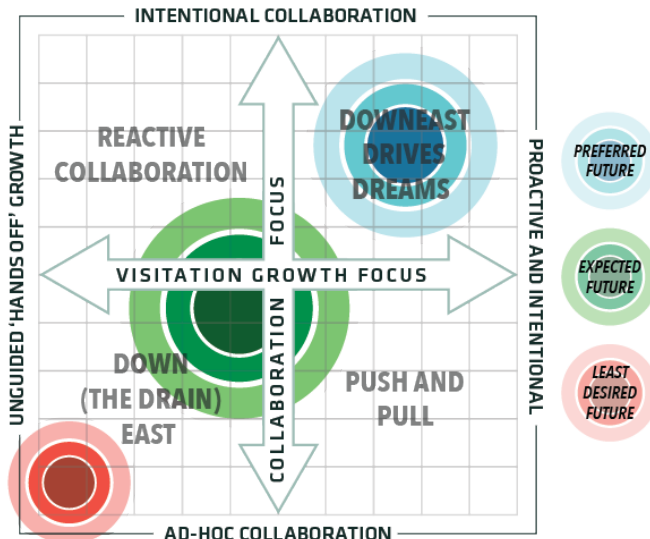
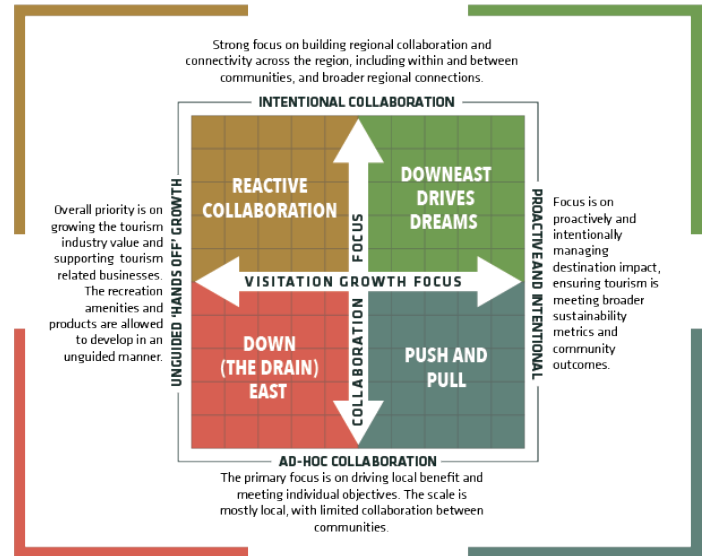
Future Trends Discussion

This conversation focused on:

- Population growth, mass urbanization, changing distribution of people worldwide
- Societal changes, shifts in systems, Technological impacts on transportation
- Emergence of sustainable tourism
- Maine Office of Tourism visitor profile, theory and research
- Emerging visitor profiles and economic impacts

Scenario Planning

Scenario planning gives participants time to think about where they are now in tourism planning, share what they expect their future will be if nothing significant happens, and examine what they truly want their future to become. This work focused on two key determinant themes –



Visitation Growth and Collaboration Focus.

Preferred Future:

The group determined that they were currently in the lower left position (red) but wanted to aim for the preferred future in the upper right position (blue). They realistically anticipate they will land in the neighborhood of the green expected future if they continue to work together collaboratively.

Strategic Pillars

Participants determined the key strategic pillars that should frame further discussion and community work:

- Build and sustain regional collaboration
- Strengthen and communicate the *Way DownEast* brand identity,
- Work to improve multi-modal transportation systems
- Improve cultural, community and nature-based visitor experiences
- Promote sustainable tourism principles and environmental stewardship



Early Recommended Projects:

The following projects were taken from a lengthy list of potential projects filtered by the following criteria: ability to be accomplished within a relatively short amount of time, highly visible to community, affordable within the budgeted amount, and able to help drive visitation to the region. The working group decided that they would accomplish an art installation in each community, but it would not be a mural as outlined here - something simpler, but recognizable indicating community collaboration among the four towns.

Thematic Mural Series

- Connect the four communities using a common theme to depict the unique individual town role in that theme. Locate murals in a highly visible location, welcoming visitors, expressing uniqueness through art.

Thematic Map Series

- Focus on similar themes as the mural series, but through a map that can serve as a guide to all the communities that offer visitor experiences on that specific theme. Two themes mentioned in detail were *Meet the Makers* (agricultural), *Made in Maine* (breweries & fiber arts), and *Way DownEast History and Culture* (Native American connection, historic homes/tours, themed festivals/events).



Recommended Next Steps:

- Reconstitute Local Working Group - done
- Project Coordinator Support - done
- Community Art Project

Consultant Insights

- Intentionally move to implementation to retain momentum
- Demonstrates to communities that positive action is possible
- Partnership with the Maine Office of Tourism for guidance and support
- Embrace the scale of the opportunity as the public seeks nature experiences and unspoiled beauty
- Build each unique local downtown experience to build the visitation economy

CDA and Project Budget:

	Amount	Explanation
Venue Rental / F&B	\$2540.00	
Summit	\$500.00	
Consultant/Facilitator	\$27,500.00	Includes LO/Mileage
Program Management Fee	\$12,500.00	SCEDC
Project Grant	\$15,000.00	
Project Management	\$3,000.00	
Total	\$61,040.00	