



**History of the Métis in Moose Jaw Area
&
Indigenous Tourism Opportunities**

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History of the Métis in Moose Jaw Area

What is now known as Moose Jaw was a vital hub in the network of ancient Prairie trails that the Métis depended upon for the travel and trade that formed their way of life. A large bend in the Moose Jaw Creek, known as "The Turn" was the location of the first known building erected on the site of the present City of Moose Jaw, a Métis 'hotel' of sorts called the Denomie Cabin. Originally, the nomadic First Nations traversed this area of the Great Plains using the trails, which were then footpaths, prior to the arrival of Europeans. The sheltered valley at The Turn provided a rare source of water and timber and was a traditional First Nations camping ground and then an important stopping over place for the increasingly diverse people groups moving across the Plains. It was the main transportation route before the railways.

In the Wild West days of Moose Jaw's history - prior to agricultural settlement - the trail was frequented by fur traders, goods freighters and Métis buffalo hunters. Red River Carts plied the trail, which became a deeply rutted cart track. Pemman was essential to the economy of the Prairie at this time and the Métis dominated the pemman business, depending upon the sturdy, ox-drawn Red River Cart and the extensive trail system for their trade. Later, pioneers heading west, often with Métis guides, arrived on carts carrying all their worldly possessions intending to become farmers or ranchers. John Macoun, the geological surveyor who was influential in the decision to route the Canadian Pacific Railway through Moose Jaw, traveled on the cart track for the first time in 1880. Just prior to the completion of the CPR, young European women, "war brides," who married Canadian soldiers during the First World War, also arrived to Moose Jaw loaded on carts. The CPR mainline west of Moose Jaw was built along the trail for many miles.

Crossroads, gathering place, winter stopover, resting place. Moose Jaw area was known as a place of peace between the nations even when intertribal conflict and wars of resistance were happening elsewhere. Here Cree, Blackfoot, Assiniboine, Gros Ventre, Lakota Sioux, Métis, and Europeans from Great Britain and Western and Eastern Europe met, mingled, traded, intermarried, and often formed cooperative relationships for the purposes of survival or trade, friendship or love.

Today, Moose Jaw's diversity still reflects these early experiences, as well as fresh waves of immigrant groups from places such as the Philippines, India, China and Syria.

[Source: Drawn from Leith Knight, "Historically Speaking," columns for the Moose Jaw Times Herald published from 1969 to 2013. Edited by Gary Horsnall.]

Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre

The Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre is named after the famed Denomie Cabin, a 12-by 16-foot cabin built by two Métis brothers and their families, and which served as a winter resting place at the present site of Moose Jaw, at the confluence of vital trade routes used by First Nations, Métis and European settlers prior to the building of the railroad. All were

welcomed at the Denomie Cabin, buffalo hunters, trappers and traders, Hudson's Bay Company employees - all no doubt inspired by the comfort, the hospitality, the shared stories and the opportunities for learning from one another before continuing their arduous journeys across the vast plains.

These features - comfort, hospitality, storytelling, and learning - form the basis of what is envisioned in Phase 2 and 3 as the development of an important Cultural Centre bringing together local history and knowledge regarding the Métis culture in the Moose Jaw area, with a focus on learning, training, and the arts. Ultimately, the purpose of the Centre is to instill in visitors, through powerful experiences generated at and through the Centre, a new narrative of Métis-Indigenous-Settler relations, providing a more nuanced understanding of shared cultural experiences and overcoming. This "new story" envisioned by the New Southern Plains Métis Local #160 is both an exploration and a recasting of historical as well as present day narratives, routed through workshops, courses, retreats and arts and culture experiences offered at the Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre.

Tourism

Tourism in Moose Jaw

Tourism is an integral part of the economy of Moose Jaw. In 2019, 32,000 people visited Tourism Moose Jaw's Visitor Centre and an estimated total of 430,000 visitors came to Moose Jaw. This resulted in an estimated \$77.4 million tourism dollars being injected into the Moose Jaw market.

According to the Moose Jaw Accommodation Summary provided by Tourism Moose Jaw, Moose Jaw's average occupancy rate between January 1 and November 10, 2019 was 61%, higher than the overall Saskatchewan occupancy rate of 57%. When a significant event is happening in Moose Jaw, the occupancy rates are between 78% and 97%. The average spending for overnight visitors is \$188 per person, per day. [Source: Tourism Moose Jaw Inc.]

Top 3 Major Tourist Attractions in Moose Jaw:

- Tunnels of Moose Jaw
- Temple Gardens Hotel and Spa
- Casino Moose Jaw

In Tourism Moose Jaw's annual presentation to Moose Jaw City Council, Executive Director Jacki L'Heureux-Mason emphasized the need for Moose Jaw to have another major family-oriented attraction to reduce dependence on the Tunnels of Moose Jaw as the primary draw for families and to increase repeat visits. She noted that the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the precarious dependence of the local economy on Tunnels of Moose Jaw, which had to shut down for most of 2020. "The drum I'm banging lately is that we do need another major attraction in Moose Jaw," she said. L'Heureux-Mason also emphasized that repeat visits need to be

higher. Currently, families return on average every 5 to 7 years. Another major attraction would draw back customers every 2 to 3 years, which would have a significant positive impact on the local economy. [Source: Video; Tourism Moose Jaw Presentation to City Council; November 26, 2020; <https://pub-moosejaw.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=4056c4dc-94d2-4ff0-9cd1-0b82c607abbd&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English>; accessed March 2, 2021]

Indigenous Tourism Opportunities

Nation wide, opportunities for Indigenous tourism are growing. The Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) reports that there is "unprecedented demand" for authentic Indigenous tourism experiences.

- 1 in 3 international visitors to Canada are interested in Indigenous tourism experiences (37%).
- Visitors from France (63%) and Germany (47%) are most likely to be interested in Indigenous tourism experiences.
- The USA (33%) and China (35%) offer the largest potential market opportunities in terms of potential visitation. (Destination Canada, 2019 Market Snapshots, quoted in Accelerating Indigenous Tourism Growth in Canada: Five-Year Strategic Plan Update 2019-2024.)

Notably, total Indigenous Tourism Revenues in Annual Canadian GDP exceeded targets established in ITAC's original 5-year plan.

- 2018 saw an increase of \$400 million to \$1.8 billion (Plan Target was to increase \$300 million to \$1.7 billion by 2021)
- 2018 total Indigenous tourism jobs in 41,153 (Plan Target was 40,223 by 2021)

ITAC's new revised 2024 target is to increase Indigenous Tourism Revenues in Annual Canadian GDP to \$2.2 billion and increase jobs to 49,383.

[Source: Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), Accelerating Indigenous Tourism Growth in Canada: Five-Year Strategic Plan Update 2019-2024.

<https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18-10-Accelerating-Tourism-Growth-Booklet-v5-WEB-1.pdf>; accessed March 2, 2021]

Saskatchewan is particularly well positioned to benefit from a focus on Indigenous tourism. In 2017, the Conference Board of Canada indicated that the Saskatchewan Indigenous tourism industry contributed \$116.7 million to the GDP, representing an increase of 23% from 2014. The province also experienced an increase in the number of Indigenous tourism operators, from 63 in 2014 to 90 in 2017, representing a 43% increase. The increase in tourism operators resulted in a 32% increase in the number of jobs, from 2,728 to 3,606 in 2017.

[Source: <https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/itac-and-tourism-saskatchewan-announce-plans-to-grow-indigenous-tourism-across-province/>; accessed March 2, 2021]

Saskatchewan also fares well in relation to the rest of Canada:

Saskatchewan: Indigenous Tourism GDP - \$116.7 million (Sixth place behind Quebec, Ontario, B.C., Alberta and Nunavut.)

Saskatchewan: Indigenous Tourism Employment (full year jobs) - 2,984 (Fourth place behind Quebec, Ontario and B.C.)

Opportunities are increasing in the Indigenous tourism sector as funding and advocacy organizations acknowledge that the province of Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of Indigenous peoples among its total population and a rapidly growing Indigenous tourism industry. In February 2020, Tourism Saskatchewan and the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) signed a memorandum of understanding in support of Indigenous tourism development. The memorandum provides the foundation for partnerships with other organizations interested in advancing economic development in the tourism industry for Indigenous communities across the province.

[Source: <https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/itac-and-tourism-saskatchewan-announce-plans-to-grow-indigenous-tourism-across-province/>; accessed March 2, 2021]

Additional key opportunities in Indigenous tourism identified as a priority by ITAC include:

- Development of Indigenous culinary experiences
- Promotion of authentic Indigenous artisans and craftspeople
- International tourism trade shows and conferences
- Expanding digital and social media asset creation
- Multi-language platforms to address rapidly growing demand from overseas markets

[Source: <https://indigenoustourism.ca/corporate/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18-10-Accelerating-Tourism-Growth-Booklet-v5-WEB-1.pdf>; accessed March 2, 2021]

Although Moose Jaw has a rich Métis and Indigenous history, Métis-Indigenous tourism is thus far underdeveloped. Moose Jaw's Western Development Museum focuses on the history of the diverse European settlers. Moose Jaw is well known for its immersive tunnel tours, inventively evoking the prohibition era of gangsters, boozehounds, coppers, and speakeasies. The Temple Gardens mineral spa is an equally important tourism draw. Moose Jaw's burgeoning culture and entertainment sector encompasses live theatre and concert venues, restaurants, museums, and public and commercial galleries. Festivals and farmers markets enliven the streets and parks from spring until fall. Every two years the skies come alive with spectacular performances featuring The Snowbirds and RCAF NATO Flying Training Program. There are trolley rides, art workshops, prairie berry wine tastings, pow wows, historic architecture and a host of other attractions. National events such as Hometown Hockey and One Horse Town helped put Moose Jaw's name out there in a positive light. Most recently, international media attention on the competition between Moose Jaw and a Norwegian city for world's tallest moose spurred a mini tourist boom in 2019. There is great potential for further investment and growth in the tourism sector.

The Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre is envisioned as Moose Jaw's first permanent tourism attraction designed, owned and operated by Métis and focused on Métis-Indigenous-Settler relations, history and culture. The Centre is well situated for visitors to access. The existing building sits along the TransCanada highway, a few minutes drive from the Tourism Moose Jaw Visitor Centre. The Denomie facility features overnight visitor accommodations, meeting rooms, dining hall and commercial kitchen. The unique property features a spring-fed lake, walking trails, and abundance of birds and other wildlife. The land has plenty of space to build a second building and amphitheatre to house the ambitious arts and culture projects and programs envisioned in Phases 2 and 3.

New Southern Plains Métis Local #160 believes that the Métis, as a bridge between cultures, have an important perspective and one that will contribute to a new, positive cultural understanding for visitors of all cultures and nationalities.

Phase 2: Learning and Advocacy

Métis is not an ethnic designation as much as it is a shared history of diverse and interwoven cultural experiences. While often the popular focus of Métis history in Saskatchewan is on experiences of resistance, defeat and surrender, there needs to be a restorative focus on the complex relations between the various groups that inhabited, and still inhabit, this area. There was a great deal of intercultural cooperation, love matches, and new families navigating and bridging multiple cultures. Many of these stories are thus far untold to a wide audience, buried in archives, or in unfinished manuscripts, or in the oral histories of early residents and their descendents. Many Métis people themselves aren't necessarily aware of their own history in all its multidimensionality, and may not even self-identify as Métis for various reasons.

We passionately believe in restoring a positive, inspiring and nuanced narrative to Métis people. We feel that a new narrative is vital to today's healing from colonization, displacement, genocide and racism. The feedback we have received from working many years with youth and with participants in addictions programs is that Métis are asking for a new story to empower their lives moving forward. The Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre will help heal, educate and inspire both local Métis as well as visitors from around the world, who may also find their own experiences reflected in the epic coming together of cultures on the Great Plains.

As a place for learning and advocacy, the Centre will partner with the Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research to offer skills training and education programs in Moose Jaw. As the official training and education arm of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan, the Gabriel Dumont Institute specializes in the delivery of Métis-specific educational programs and services. (The Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre is envisioned as being an inclusive centre and would not limit participation to only Métis people.) The Centre has identified the following types of courses for implementation in Moose Jaw: Health Care/Nursing, Office Education, Safety Tickets, Entrepreneurship and Economic Development. The Learning Centre would have the capacity to host classes, workshops and retreats according to identified needs and opportunities as the Centre evolves. Courses in culinary tourism would fit in well with Moose Jaw's emerging

local sustainable food culture. Exciting opportunities for learning in the area of arts and culture are described in the Arts and Culture section.

Advocacy is an important piece due to the fact that there are a number of resources in Saskatchewan available to assist Métis people with their education, careers and entrepreneurial development. The Centre would offer advocacy workshops to provide information to participants on programs that are being offered by funding bodies. As a Learning Centre, the Denomie facility is well equipped with overnight accommodations, both large and small meeting rooms, kitchen and dining room, and beautiful outdoor spaces - all in a peaceful environment conducive to learning.

Phase 3: Arts and Culture

Drawing on contemporary art trends, the Centre will become home to immersive, multimedia art that will transport audiences of all ages into other realms of experience, providing meaningful education as well as fun and adventure. The Denomie Centre is anticipated to become, alongside the spa and the tunnel tours, a primary tourism draw in Moose Jaw.

Imagine, if you will, yourself seated on a Red River Cart rumbling along the dirt track known as the Qu'Appelle-Wood Mountain-Cypress Hills Trail. The whine of the wheels resounds loudly across the apparent barren plains that stretch around you as far as your eye can see. Then, on the horizon, something moves, a mass forms and quickly comes closer. You hear the voice of your Métis Guide, telling you to watch and learn. The mass is a herd of bison, magnificent in their sheer might and speed. The ground vibrates underneath you. Then, you discern the riders, buffalo hunters! Chaos erupts around you as you are immersed briefly in the hunt, then the herd flows past and the riders with them... You travel onwards... Now you are under the stars, watching a romance develop around the campfire between a man and a woman. They speak different languages, until a new language emerges that they both can speak. You are hearing Michif, the language of the Métis people. The scene changes yet again as you journey through layers of time with your Métis Guide, and experience the unfolding adventure with all its hardships and triumphs.

Immersive art creates moving and powerful experiences for participants and will provide an effective way to convey the sometimes difficult to imagine cultural history of the interconnected peoples. Artists will create exciting, meaningful art installations - both permanent and temporary - to house in the Centre. It is proposed that permanent installations be designed by acclaimed artists with Moose Jaw roots, such as Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota), whose international reputation was earned through her creative works incorporating themes of indigenous history, culture, beauty and spirituality. Collaborative arts and culture projects involving Métis, Indigenous and Settler descendants will foster a creative reimagining of past, present and future.

Métis leader Louis Riel proclaimed prophetically in 1885, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back."

Programs such as a proposed "Content Creator" in Residence Program will enliven the Centre with the presence of working contemporary artists, writers, videographers and media creators. Contemporary Métis and Indigenous artists tend to be multidisciplinary, producing photographs, videos, mixed-media installations, text works, and performances. Métis content creators such as Zane Buchanan, a former "Saskatchewanderer" and talented writer, videographer and podcaster, will be invited to participate in the Residence Program, which will serve as a support and catalyst to Métis development in the creative sector. Traditionally, artist and writer in residence programs have a dual purpose: first, to support individual artists who benefit from a space to stay and create, and secondly, to engage the community as the resident artist gives back through workshops and one-on-one meetings with local aspiring artists. Such programs provide exposure and mentorship in the arts for children, youth and adults. Mentorship can be pivotal in the life of a young person seeking encouragement for their own potential.

Tatawa Park: Future Goals and Collaborative Tourism Development

It is difficult to overstate the enormous potential for Métis-Indigenous cultural tourism development in Moose Jaw. Tatawa Park, located at the southern end of Moose Jaw in the former Wild Animal Park, was historically used by Métis and First Nations groups who camped there - most famously, by the Lakota Sioux people, who traveled to the Moose Jaw area in 1833 and made what is now Tatawâw Park their permanent home for 30 years, until they moved to reserve land at Wood Mountain in the early 1910s. Chief Sitting Bull led his people to settle there following the Battle of Little Big Horn. There is currently no tourism development related to this very important site.

The tourism potential is huge. The Wild Animal Park, which operated at that site from 1929 to 1995, is estimated to have had an average attendance of almost a million people per year. The 540-acre, open-air zoo contained over 200 types of animals from across Canada and the northwestern United States and educated visitors on animals and environmental preservation. Bison, bears, wolves and, eventually, more exotic animals such as lions inhabited the Park. For the past 25 years, this beautiful and wild river valley land has been a popular hiking area for locals, but otherwise sits idle. If successful partnerships can be forged with the City of Moose Jaw and the varied groups that have cultural and historic interest in the property, the site has the potential to become a world class tourism destination.

The New Southern Plains Métis Local #160 is very interested in being part of a collaborative effort to develop the Tatawa Park site. The City of Moose Jaw is currently in the process of deciding whether to embark on a comprehensive Municipal Cultural Planning process, and it is anticipated that such a process would be pivotal in bringing together diverse local groups to envision, work and create together a Cultural Plan for the City. It is hoped that the future development of Tatawa Park would be part of that process. Such a process may take several years; in the meantime, the creation of the Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre would position the Métis well in establishing a foundation for Métis-Indigenous tourism, learning, culture and the arts. The development of organizational capacity and partnerships via the

Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre would help facilitate future goals propelled by an even more ambitious and far reaching collaborative vision.

Content Creator in Residence

The Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre proposes to host a two-month, financially supported position for a Métis Content Creator in Residence at the facility annually. The Content Creator residency aims to recognize the contribution of Métis artists, craftspeople and knowledge keepers to Moose Jaw and to Saskatchewan. The purpose is to honour Métis culture and to promote intercultural understanding, perspective-taking, and communication between Métis, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

The residency aims to create a supportive environment for content creators to have time and space to create their own work while introducing the local community, international visitors and Saskatchewan school tours to content creators and forms they may not otherwise experience.

Community engagement events, such as lectures, workshops, and regular open studio hours provide the public with opportunities to meet the artist, observe the creative process and participate in content creation. The Denomie Centre will put out a call for emerging or mid-career self-identified Métis content creators working in any artistic discipline and who enjoy working with people. An emerging or mid-career artist is identified as one who has not been internationally shown and does not have regular representation by an agent or gallery.

The residency will be based in a studio in the Denomie Centre, allowing the artist to work on their own projects in a comfortable, private space conducive to individual creation as well as opportunities for engaging with visitors. Overnight accommodation for the artist will be provided within the Centre as required. Experience working with communities, large groups and/or children and youth will be an asset. The residency will run for two months, March and April, annually. The content creator will be required to deliver a public talk at the beginning of the residency and, at minimum, two public workshops and/or school programs, all set in collaboration with the Denomie Centre. The content creator will determine their schedule and hold regular, open studio hours for a minimum five hours per week. The residency will culminate in an April exhibition or performance.

The remuneration is \$50 per hour to a maximum of 60 hours per residency. This amount includes preparation time and onsite program delivery time, and any other project expenses incurred by the applicant, except for materials specific to community engagement events.

Annual Budget: \$7,000
Content Creator remuneration: \$3,000
Materials for Community Engagement Events: \$2,000
Content Creator Travel: \$500
Advertising and Promotions: \$1,500

Literature Review and Cultural Inventory

The Literature Review and Cultural Inventory will be an annotated listing of Moose Jaw-specific Métis resources that will be compiled for the Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre, spearheaded by the New Southern Plains Métis Local #160 in collaboration with the Moose Jaw Public Library Archives, Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Métis Nation Saskatchewan, and local knowledge keepers. The intent of the materials will be to help incorporate local Métis history, culture, knowledge and perspectives into all of the programs and projects envisioned for the Denomie Hospitality and Learning Centre. The Literature Review produced will include books and e-books, articles, websites, videos, guides as well as unpublished materials. The Cultural Inventory will include a listing of existing cultural artefacts, their owners and locations, as well as a listing of Moose Jaw and area Métis knowledge holders in the fields of Métis history, language and culture, including individuals who have a relation to Moose Jaw but may live elsewhere now.

Budget: \$7,500

Research, compilation, writing, and preparation of the document: \$5,000

Design and publishing in electronic format: \$2,000

Travel: \$300

Materials: \$200

In collaboration with the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, we will build a Red River Cart to display at the Denomie Centre property. In collaboration with SaskPower, a teepee will be erected on the property. The cart and teepee will serve as tourist attractions and for educational purposes, bringing together the history of Métis, First Nations and settlers.

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