



# North Huron/Blyth Festival Cooperative Marketing Plan

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An action item in the North Huron Strategic Plan stated that North Huron would aggressively promote existing assets, including the Richard LeVan Airport, Threshers Campground, Memorial Hall etc. and capitalize and expand on existing community partnerships to effectively utilize venues and maximize marketing potential. To date, the North Huron and Blyth Festival Marketing Cooperative has been the most notable partnership. North Huron's investment in the project allows Blyth Festival to direct mail the season's program to 15,000 patrons. An additional 15,000 are printed and distributed through tourist information centres throughout Ontario and local businesses. Four pages in the brochure are earmarked for North Huron content, which is used to encourage those attending the festival to stay a little longer and experience more of what North Huron and the surrounding area has to offer.

## **Tourism Marketing**

A 2016 report conducted by the Center for Marketing Technology at Bentley University in Massachusetts explored the importance of print brochures in a world that is coming increasingly digitalized. According to the study conducted in several countries including Canada, print advertising continues to play an important role in leisure time planning. According to this study, while print brochures are currently the second most used resource when *planning* a trip (behind websites), once a visitor has arrived at a location, brochures take the number one spot in influencing a visitor's activities. The study noted that 78% of respondents indicated that they consider altering travel plans as a result of a brochure.

The value of a print brochure doesn't seem restricted to a certain age group. While the study found that more women than men use brochures for planning leisure time, that group is expanding to include younger women aged 18 – 24 suggesting that “digital-natives” are adapting to a multi-media world. Survey respondents also indicated that visitors perceived brochures to be up-to-date and trustworthy.

- **7 out of 10** visitors pick-up brochures at their travel destination
- **95%** of visitors have their travel plans influenced by information from a brochure
- **83%** plan to visit a business or attraction highlighted in a brochure, map or travel guide
- **78%** of visitors consider altering their travel plans as a result of a brochure
- **53%** of travelers use brochures to plan their trip before they arrive at their vacation

\*Visitor International Brochure  
Distribution Research conducted by the  
Director of the Centre for Marketing  
Technology, Bentley University, 2016

## Blyth Festival

Locally, in 2016 Blyth Festival saw an increase of 34% in their audience over 2015 numbers (or 4000 more patrons). Of these 4000 patrons, nearly 2000 had never bought tickets to Blyth before; this means that more than 10% of Blyth's 2016 audience were brand new to the Festival and potentially the area. The Festival intends to draw 20,000 visitors to the 2017 season and continues to work to engage visitors to the area. The Festival 2017 season will be extended over the International Plowing Match when an estimated 85,000 – 100,000 visitors will be in the area effectively creating a large pool of visitors that are most influenced by print media.

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*“The 2016 season will be written in the annals of the Blyth Festival as an unequivocal artistic triumph.” Robert Reid – Reid Between the Lines*

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## Blyth and Local Business Feedback

In preparing this report, a small sample of Blyth Businesses were asked to give feedback on the following questions. Does the Blyth Festival have a positive effect on your business? If so, are you able to quantify it? Respondents reported an increase in business during festival season from 100 to 400%. One mentioned that the increase in business is obvious as early as the arrival of the cast and crew and continues after closing night while the company is still in town. Some indicated the importance of the Festival Season to the viability of their business with one indicating the need to hire additional staff during the festival months. It was also noticed by business operators that festival patrons have chosen to come back to town during the off-season to spend some time in the area and visit area businesses and eating establishments.

The Blyth Business Retention and Expansion Report (BR+E) conducted in 2012 identifies marketing as a priority for the village. The Blyth 365 Marketing Report completed in 2014 stated that “Blyth will be an even more vibrant community that will attract more culture, more residents, more visitors and more businesses.” It also stated that “Culture and Tourism will be at the fore front as a key contributor to the quality of life in Blyth.”

## 2017 Marketing Plan

Goals identified in the North Huron Strat Economic Development Strategic Plan included promoting our Cultural Assets by leverage partnerships to create a stronger marketing presence and optimize advertising dollars. All eyes are on Blyth and 2017 promises to be an exciting year. Anticipation for the Festival's 2017 season is great with three of the four plays on the main stage being world premieres. The newly renovated Memorial Hall and the opening of Cowbell Brewing Company will see increased traffic and visitors to the area.

The 2017 North Huron/Blyth Festival Marketing Plan intends to capitalize on the enormous amount of attention that is currently focused on Blyth. Working with Cowbell Brewing Company with input from their marketing representatives, North Huron and Blyth Festival will build a campaign that will focus on local food and drink options and promote the area as a destination. By highlighting more of what can be

done while in Blyth and the North Huron area, the campaign will encourage visitors to spend more time and patronize more businesses in the area.

Working collaboratively with the Blyth BIA, the campaign will be enhanced to engage visitors once they are here and actively promote awareness of other business and events.

### **Relationship to North Huron Strategic Plan**

Goal #1 Our community is attractive to new business and residents

Outcome: We foster a positive business environment that retains, promotes and attracts businesses and investment.

ACTION: Aggressively promote existing assets, including the Richard LeVan Airport, Threshers Campground, Memorial Hall etc. Capitalize and expand on existing community partnerships to effectively utilize venues and maximize marketing potential.

Outcome: Tourism is a driver in economic development

ACTION: Explore ways to enhance marketing partnership with Blyth Centre for the Arts and design future campaigns to encourage increased participation from area businesses.

### **Relationship to North Huron Strat Economic Development Strategic Plan**

Goal: A community that values Arts, Heritage and Culture

Strategic Direction: Promote our Cultural Assets

Action: Leverage partnerships to create a stronger marketing presence and optimize advertising dollars.