



# Strategic Plan 2021-2024

Refined by the Board of Directors April 22, 2021

## 1. Mission and Vision

### **Mission**

*To enhance and sustain the Path of the Paddle, Trans Canada Trail section from Thunder Bay to Manitoba for diverse trail users who paddle and portage.*

### **Vision**

*As a wilderness segment of Trans Canada Trail, the Path of the Paddle will be recognized as a world-class trail network connecting waterways, municipalities and Indigenous communities across Northwestern Ontario, providing a recreational relationship with nature, history and culture for people of all ages and abilities, for generations.*

## 2. Goals and Objectives for the Next Three Years

Over the next three years Path of the Paddle Association plans to move forward in these eight areas, which are its goals.

- Trail and campsite maintenance
- Regional Trail Committees
- Trail Information
- Brand awareness and identification
- Governance – renewal and succession
- Guide Products
- Non-Canadian resident camping
- TCTO Land Trail Plan.

The path to achieving the goals is through the objectives identified below each. The importance and urgency of each objective has been identified.

### **a) Trail and campsite maintenance**

**All trails and campsites will be regularly maintained and in usable condition.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
a.1 Create a trail management strategy to address regular and specific maintenance needs. The strategy will include key areas for attendance – boat launches, portage and campsite maintenance and construction, signage upkeep, constantly updated geo-referencing, safety planning. With attention to all areas of the route at least every five years. And including costing for implementation	X			X		
a.2 Develop partnerships to enable the implementation of the trail management strategy.	X			X		
a.3 Engage Wilderness Trail Stewards and other contractors and volunteers (as funds permit) who travel the route and identify areas requiring attention and do maintenance.		X			X	
a.4 Use social media to gather information about portages and campsites needing attention.		X				X

**b) Regional Trail Committees**

**RTC will be in place in Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Dryden and Kenora with volunteers who are active in maintaining and promoting the Path of the Paddle.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
b.1 Build connections with individuals and groups who can collaborate on trail work, particularly at spring start up, and strengthen the volunteer base.	X				X	
b.2 Provide coordination and support so that RTCs can be effective and timely in their work.		X			X	
b.3 Seek municipal participation in adjacent RTCs.		X			X	

**c) Trail Information**

**Path of the Paddle will communicate trail condition information, e.g., closed sections, blowdowns, beaver dams, etc. to potential users via its website.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
c.1 Develop appropriate information for the website to encourage people to be properly prepared before they begin their wilderness trip. Ensure that they recognize that the majority of the route does not have cell phone service.	X			X		
c.2 Post trail condition information on the website, as it becomes available.		X			X	

**d) Brand awareness and identification**

**The Path of the Paddle brand will be recognized and will be seen as an integral and intriguing part of Trans Canada Trail.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
d.1 Develop a co-branding strategy – TCT and POPA –to include signage, website, literature, etc.	X			X		
d.2 Ensure an effective two-way web linkage – TCT and POPA.	X			X		
d.3 Explore and establish partnerships with marketing	X				X	

organizations: Sunset Country, Tourism Thunder Bay, Superior Country, Ontario Parks. Make use of the marketing channels developed by these groups to raise awareness of Path of the Paddle, e.g., maps, websites, blogs, portals.						
d.4 Continue to provide updates to ensure the route is precisely portrayed in Land Information Ontario.			X			X
d.5 Establish relationships with municipalities and First Nations: from east to west: Thunder Bay, Fort William First Nation, Neebing, Atikokan, Lac la Croix First Nation, Ignace, Wabigoon Ojibway Nation, Dryden, Eagle Lake First Nation, Machin, Wauzhusk Onigum, Kenora, Oochlichagwebabigoing, Minaki, Wabseemoong Independent Nation. The Coordinator to make these contacts with support from local Board members to look for opportunities for collaborations.		X			X	
d.6 Establish and maintain a professional website and active social media presence – Facebook, Instagram.	X			X		
d.7 Hold community events to raise awareness, seek volunteers and raise funds.		X			X	
d.8 Seek opportunities to promote POPA, e.g., trade shows, literature, events, feature articles in mass media publications.		X			X	
d.9 Engage Wilderness Trail Stewards and other contractors and volunteers (as funds permit) who travel the Trail to maintain it as well as collect information and raise awareness of the Path of the Paddle through their communications.		X			X	
d.10 Seek support of contractors and/or marketing students to develop and possibly implement some aspects of a marketing plan.		X			X	

**e) Governance – renewal and succession**

**The Board of Directors sets direction and policy and ensures that the organization has the resources it needs to recruit and retain volunteers as Board and Regional Trail Committee members, and retain staff to carry out the operations of POPA.**

	Importance	Urgency
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	H	M	L	H	M	L
e.1 Ensure the Board is made up of people with the necessary skills – paddlers, trail building and maintenance, information and mapping products, marketing, business, fundraising, government relations, governance.	X				X	
e.2 Ensure the Board membership represents the demographics of the area in which the Trail is located.	X					X
e.3 Maintain an evergreen list of potential Board members from throughout the area and with the range of skills needed, in time to fill vacancies.	X			X		
e.4 Recognize the efforts of volunteers.	X				X	
e.5 Collaborate with TCT to make use of their charitable tax status or work with TCT to find a successful model and reapply for charitable status.		X			X	

**f) Guide products**

**Path of the Paddle will identify to potential travelers the guide products that they need to safely travel the entire route.**

**Path of the Paddle will explore virtual tools that make the trail experience more inclusive and assist people in preparation for their travels.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
f.1 Sell overview maps.	X			X		
f.2 Develop and implement a distribution strategy for the maps using existing retailers.		X			X	
f.3 Explore virtual tools including video and photo tours to provide paddlers and viewers with an experience of the Path of the Paddle route.		X				X
f.4 Collaborate with cellphone app makers to raise the profile of the POPA route.		X			X	

**g) Non-Canadian resident camping**

**Mechanisms will be in place so that non-Canadian residents can camp along the Path of the Paddle route in areas now termed Green Zones which prevent such camping.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
g.1 Work with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the land manager, to find ways to address this issue.	X			X		
g.2 While working with stakeholders, consider options to solve the problem, e.g., Land Use Permits held by stakeholders for campsites, possibly connected with businesses and information products.		X			X	

**h) TCTO Land Trail Plan**

**Liaise and support TCTO in its initiative to create a land trail from Thunder Bay to the Manitoba border.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
h.1 Proactively engage TCTO regarding their interest in a land trail. Ensure their plans take into accounts the interests of POPA, e.g, trailheads, signage, bike routes, synergies for maintenance.		X			X	

## 3. Budget and Operations Plan

### 3.1 Information Plan

The information work of the organization is described in these three goals:

- Trail awareness
- Brand awareness and identification
- Guide products.

Some key steps have been completed. Examples are registering the route with Land Information Ontario. Updates will be needed if and as the route changes. The overview map has been published and now is in distribution mode. Work continues with TCT regarding branding as TCT has now changed its name back to the original Trans Canada Trail.

Near future information activities include developing and posting guide products and posting trail information to help people be prepared for safe travel and to understand the trail conditions they might encounter.

### 3.2 Marketing Plan

#### Users of the Trail – Actual and Potential

These actual and potential users were described and categorized, based on Board members' knowledge of who does and might use the Trail, along with the most common duration for trail users. Marketing activities can address particular market segments.

Explorers	Youth Groups	Culture & Heritage	Fishing
-includes connected explorers and up and coming explorers -physical activity -volunteer vacations -trail clearing volunteers  Most commonly 4-5 days	-Scouts -Taylor Statten -Camp Stephens   1 – 6 weeks, usually 8 to 10 days	-includes knowledge seekers and nature lovers -interested in the arts, history and natural history  Day users or a few days	-destination -ice fishing -open water fishing -snowmobiling May be an incidental user of the trail  Generally day users
<b>International</b>	<b>Manitoba and other Canadians</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Provincial Park Users</b>

<p>-Potential, but currently unable to camp on a large proportion of the trail</p> <p>At this time must be day users</p>	<p>-People interested in the Trans Canada aspect of the trail</p> <p>-Manitobans because its close and different from home</p> <p>Duration may be dictated by type of user, see above</p>	<p>-Day trips</p> <p>-People who live nearby and enjoy the outdoors and exercise</p> <p>Day users near home</p>	<p>-Both within the parks and extending beyond park boundaries</p> <p>Similar to explorers, 4 -5 days to a week or 10 days</p>
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The marketing work of the organization is described in the goal:

- Brand awareness and identification.

The Information Plan actions described above provide the foundation for the marketing work. As described in the Brand awareness and identification objectives, key marketing priorities are:

- Strengthen the social media presence – currently under way
- Work with Sunset Country, Tourism Thunder Bay and Superior Country to use their channels to increase market awareness, e.g., include the POPA route on maps, be present on regional attractions website, have stories on the Destination Northern Ontario portal
- Strengthen the relationships with Ontario Parks re marketing in-park sections
- Support the Wilderness Trail Stewards and other contractors and volunteers and their information activities
- Strengthen relationships with all regional communities and First Nations through which the route travels
- Consider outreach to the market segments identified above and the best ways to reach them, e.g., publications, listings, events
- Find ways to promote the Trail as an inclusive opportunity for people of all ages and to both develop and market sections of the Trail as accessible for people with disabilities.



### **3.3 Staffing/Contractor Plan**

The most significant expense, and an essential position for the Path of the Paddle Association will be the compensation costs for a Coordinator. This position is key to organizing and mobilizing volunteers, building partnerships, raising awareness of the POPA and providing information to potential users. In effect, this position will be responsible for creating the momentum to achieve POPA's goals.

Wilderness Trail Stewards, contractors and volunteers - are also an asset as they will travel the route and maintain portages and campsites, do GIS and geo-referenced mapping of the route, portages and campsites, collect usage data, and promote the route through their blogs and other social media posts.

The key work of the Coordinator is to lead in the implementation of the Board's eight goals. Work would begin on those objectives that are both important and urgent. The season of the year when the Coordinator begins work would also be a factor in determining the early priority tasks. For example, providing support to and leveraging the information and marketing impact of the Wilderness Canoe Stewards would be a key priority in the summer. Planning for summer trail maintenance is a spring priority. While marketing is an all-year-round activity, some aspects of it are busier in the winter and spring. Over the course of the year all the goal areas need attention.

See also Appendix 1: Responsibilities of the Coordinator.

### 3.4 Budget

#### Revenue

Estimated potential earned revenue over the 3-year term, assuming an April 1, 2021 start date.

Item	Not updated		
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Trans Canada Trail support – for capital, operations, coordinator	5,000	10,000	10,000
Municipal contributions*	3,000	5,000	6,000
Memberships	500	750	1,000
Corporate donations	3,000	4,000	5,000
Virtual Paddling Film Festival	50	0	0
Paddling Film Festival - Kenora	0	250	250
Paddling Film Festival - Atikokan	0	350	350
Paddling Film Festival - Dryden	0	200	200
Tales of the Trails Thunder Bay/Neebing	0	500	500
Map sales revenue	2,000	2,500	2,500
Contract Wilderness Trail Stewards, Groomers	18,000	10,000	10,000
Potential government funders#: Destination Northern Ontario, Ontario Trillium Foundation, FedNor	35,300	20,000	20,000
Anticipated revenue	66,850	53,550	55,800

- \* Based on the size of the communities, the following amounts will be requested of municipalities through their economic development or tourism organizations:  
 \$5,000 Thunder Bay  
 \$1,000 Kenora and Dryden  
 \$500 Neebing, Atikokan, Ignace and Machin  
 The amounts in the budget are based on the reality that not all municipalities will be able/willing to contribute at these levels.
- + In order to carry out operations at the anticipated level, funds will be sought from a variety of grants and other sources

# Potential funders are listed. At this time grant applications have not been prepared. It is not possible to determine if and how much funding may be available.

## Expenses

Estimated potential expenses over the 5-year term, assuming an April 1, 2021 start date.

Item	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Part-time Coordinator	20,000	24,000	24,000
Administration, phone, bank charges, insurance	10,500	10,500	10,500
Annual in-person Board meetings – travel, meeting space, meals, convening	6,000	5,000	5,000
Wilderness Trail Stewards, contracts	15,500	10,000	10,000
Wilderness Trail Stewards, contractors, volunteers – food per diems, travel	3,000	3,000	3,000
Trail maintenance – gas, mileage, equipment, including spring clean- up and ongoing maintenance	5,000	5,000	5,000
Marketing and promotions	4,000	4,000	4,000
Anticipated Expenses	64,000	61,500	61,500

**Financial Summary (Deficit)**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Revenue	66,850	53,550	55,800
Expense	64,000	61,500	61,500
Balance	2,850	(7,950)	(5,700)

This financial projection shows a small surplus in 2021-22 and losses in the subsequent two years.

The operation of the Path of the Paddle Association will require on-going grant support. With limited methods of generating earned revenue, support for the main staff position, the Coordinator, will be key to making the work possible. Government grant support is anticipated but cannot be guaranteed so no amounts are projected. In order to operate at the projected level, POPA will need to secure a variety of public, non-profit and private sector funds in addition to ongoing support from TCT.

## 4. Next Steps

At its April 22, 2021 meeting, the Board identified these steps for action in 2021. (The list is numbered for ease of discussing. The list is not necessarily in order of priority.)

1. Complete this report.
2. Board review this report at next meeting.
3. RTC groups to plan for implementing the Ontario Trillium Foundation project in their areas in 2021.
4. Board recruitment – develop an evergreen list of potential Board and RTC members.
5. Explore FedNor opportunities. Now that FedNor is a stand-alone agency does this create opportunities? Given that both Ontario and Canada are in post-pandemic recovery and pre-election mode, there may be more than usual opportunities for funds and project grants.
6. Look at corporate and municipal fundraising opportunities.
7. Marketing and website implementation.
8. Look into collaborations with filmmakers, virtual reality, etc. to explore our route.

## Appendix 2: Responsibilities of the Coordinator

Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

1. **Trail Maintenance:** Collaborates to ensure ongoing trail maintenance.
  - a. Work with Regional Trail Committees, volunteers, Board and contractors to ensure that all campsites (179) and portages (134) on all 1,100km Path of the Paddle routes are established, signed, documented and maintained.
  - b. Communication with land owners, including Indigenous and Metis communities, municipalities, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry including Ontario Parks and private landowners.
  - c. Ensure the route is always precisely portrayed in Land Information Ontario.
  
2. **Board Governance:** Works with Board in order to fulfill the organization mission.
  - a. Responsible for leading Path of the Paddle in a manner that supports and guides the organization's mission as defined by the Board of Directors.
  - b. Responsible for communicating effectively with the Board and providing, in a timely and accurate manner, all information necessary for the Board to function properly and make informed decisions.
  
3. **Financial Performance and Viability:** Develops resources sufficient to ensure the financial health of the organization.
  - a. Responsible for the fiscal integrity of Path of the Paddle, to include administering and accounting for POPA's funds and submission to the Board of monthly financial statements, which accurately reflect the financial condition of the organization.
  - b. Responsible for the fiscal management that generally anticipates operating within the approved budget, ensures effective resource utilization, and maintenance of the organization in a positive financial position.
  - c. Responsible for fundraising, including grant writing and reporting, and developing other resources necessary to support Path of the Paddle's mission.
  
4. **Organization Mission and Strategy:** Works with Board and staff to ensure that the mission is fulfilled through initiatives, strategic planning and community outreach.
  - a. Responsible to guide implementation of the strategic plan to ensure that Path of the Paddle can successfully fulfill its Mission into the future.
  - b. Identify, write, implement, monitor and report on grants.
  - c. Work with municipalities to raise the profile of the trail and to maintain areas of municipal interest.
  
5. **Brand Awareness and Marketing:** Works with contractors and partners to ensure enhanced awareness of POPA.
  - a. Responsible for the enhancement of Path of the Paddle's brand and image by being active and visible in the communities, through website and social media and by working closely with other professional, civic and private organizations, particularly regional tourism development and marketing organizations –

- Destination Northern Ontario, Sunset Country, Tourism Thunder Bay, Superior Country.
- b. Raise the profile of Trans Canada Trail in Northwestern Ontario and POPA's portion of it through co-branding with TCT and TCTO.
6. **Organization Operations:** Oversees and manages the use of human and financial resources to ensure that the operations of the organization are appropriate.
- a. Responsible for effective administration of Path of the Paddle's day to day operations.
  - b. Responsible for the hiring and retention of competent, qualified contractors, as funds permit.
  - c. Responsible for risk management for field contractors and volunteers.
  - d. Work with volunteers to support their meaningful engagement with the organization and provide appropriate support and recognition.
  - e. Work with Wilderness Trail Stewards, contractors and volunteers by providing logistical support, amplifying their communications work to raise the profile of POPA and improving route information.
7. **Relationships and Partnerships:** Establish effective working relationships.
- a. Work effectively with TCT and TCTO to optimize the support that POPA receives from these organizations.
  - b. Build supportive connections and relationships with regional partners: municipalities, Indigenous communities, tourism development and marketing organizations, others.
8. **Maps and Information Products:** Coordinate the distribution of maps and the development of information products.
- a. Coordinate distribution of the map through retail outlets and other methods.
  - b. Coordinate the development of an on-line approach to route information, audio-visual tools.
  - c. As appropriate work with the Board on approaches for specific route information products and guidebooks.

**Appendix 2: The Coordinator Hits the Ground Running**  
**The first 7 months - September, 2021 – March, 2022**

This work plan summarizes the priority tasks for the Coordinator for the first seven months under the assumption that the person is hired to begin in September, 2021 and works part time on a flexible schedule.

The Coordinator's key function is to work with the Board on the implementation of the Board's strategic plan. To that end, the Coordinator will begin by working on the High Importance, High Urgency tasks. As time permits, attention can then be turned to the Moderate Importance, Moderate Urgency tasks. Note that the Board may re-categorize some tasks based on evolving circumstances.

**a) Trail and campsite maintenance**

**All trails and campsites will be regularly maintained and in usable condition.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
a.1 Create a trail management strategy to address regular and specific maintenance needs. The strategy will include key areas for attendance – boat launches, portage and campsite maintenance and construction, signage upkeep, constantly updated geo-referencing, safety planning. With attention to all areas of the route at least every five years. And including costing for implementation	X			X		
a.2 Develop partnerships to enable the implementation of the trail management strategy.	X			X		
a.3 Engage Wilderness Trail Stewards and other contractors and volunteers (as funds permit) who travel the route and identify areas requiring attention and do maintenance.		X			X	
a.4 Use social media to gather information about portages and campsites needing attention.		X				X

**b) Regional Trail Committees**

**RTC will be in place in Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Dryden and Kenora with volunteers who are active in maintaining and promoting the Path of the Paddle.**



	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
b.1 Build connections with individuals and groups who can collaborate on trail work, particularly at spring start up, and strengthen the volunteer base.	X				X	
b.2 Provide coordination and support so that RTCs can be effective and timely in their work.		X			X	
b.3 Seek municipal participation in adjacent RTCs.		X			X	

**c) Trail Information**

**Path of the Paddle will communicate trail condition information, e.g., closed sections, blowdowns, beaver dams, etc. to potential users via its website.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
c.1 Develop appropriate information for the website to encourage people to be properly prepared before they begin their wilderness trip. Ensure that they recognize that the majority of the route does not have cell phone service.	X			X		
c.2 Post trail condition information on the website, as it becomes available.		X			X	

**d) Brand awareness and identification**

**The Path of the Paddle brand will be recognized and will be seen as an integral and intriguing part of Trans Canada Trail.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
d.1 Develop a co-branding strategy – TCT and POPA –to include signage, website, literature, etc.	X			X		
d.2 Ensure an effective two-way web linkage – TCT and POPA.	X			X		
d.3 Explore and establish partnerships with marketing organizations: Sunset Country, Tourism Thunder Bay, Superior Country, Ontario Parks. Make use of the marketing channels developed by these groups to raise awareness of Path of the Paddle, e.g., maps, websites, blogs, portals.	X				X	

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
d.4 Continue to provide updates to ensure the route is precisely portrayed in Land Information Ontario.			X			X
d.5 Establish relationships with municipalities and First Nations: from east to west: Thunder Bay, Fort William First Nation, Neebing, Atikokan, Lac la Croix First Nation, Ignace, Wabigoon Ojibway Nation, Dryden, Eagle Lake First Nation, Machin, Wauzhusk Onigum, Kenora, Oochlichagwebabigoing, Minaki, Wabseemoong Independent Nation. The Coordinator to make these contacts with support from local Board members to look for opportunities for collaborations.		X			X	
d.6 Establish and maintain a professional website and active social media presence – Facebook, Instagram.	X			X		
d.7 Hold community events to raise awareness, seek volunteers and raise funds.		X			X	
d.8 Seek opportunities to promote POPA, e.g., trade shows, literature, events, feature articles in mass media publications.		X			X	
d.9 Engage Wilderness Trail Stewards and other contractors and volunteers (as funds permit) who travel the Trail to maintain it as well as collect information and raise awareness of the Path of the Paddle through their communications.		X			X	
d.10 Seek support of contractors and/or marketing students to develop and possibly implement some aspects of a marketing plan.		X			X	

**e) Governance Renewal and Succession**

This work is the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The Coordinator will support the Board's work in this area rather than take leadership.

**f) Guide products**

- Path of the Paddle will identify to potential travelers the guide products that they need to safely travel the entire route.**
- Path of the Paddle will explore virtual tools that make the trail experience more inclusive and assist people in preparation for their travels.**

	Importance			Urgency		
	H	M	L	H	M	L
f.1 Sell overview maps.	X			X		
f.2 Develop and implement a distribution strategy for the maps using existing retailers.		X			X	
f.3 Explore virtual tools including video and photo tours to provide paddlers and viewers with an experience of the Path of the Paddle route.		X				X
f.4 Collaborate with cellphone app makers to raise the profile of the POPA route.		X			X	

**g) Non-Canadian resident camping**

Because of the technical and political nature of this work, in this time period the Coordinator will act to support the Board in this area rather than lead.

**h) TCTO Land Trail Plan**

Because of the technical and political nature of this work, in this time period the Coordinator will act to support the Board in this area rather than lead.

**Operations and Administration**

In addition to working on these strategic initiatives, the Coordinator will be doing the work as laid out in Appendix 1: Responsibilities of the Coordinator.

Key areas for attention include:

3. Financial Performance and Viability – an important aspect of which will be grant writing, implementing, monitoring and reporting.
6. Organization Operations.

The Board plans to have an in-person Board meeting in the fall or winter (depending on COVID conditions). This will be an important learning and connecting opportunity for the Coordinator.