



## **Strategic Marketing Plan:**

Launching the Brand of the North Central Enterprise Region

Tap Communications Inc.

February 2010



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
BACKGROUND	4
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	7
TARGET AUDIENCES	9
KEY MESSAGES	10
LAUNCH CAMPAIGN RECOMMENDATIONS	12
MEASUREMENT	23
CONCLUSION	24



## INTRODUCTION

Tap Communications Inc. was selected by the North Central Enterprise Region in October 2009 to develop a place brand strategy for the Region. The brand identity process included identifying the attitudes and perceptions of key Region stakeholders, as well as highlighting the opportunities and challenges of the Region. The process also included recommending a name, slogan and overall brand key messages for North Central. Tap completed this work and submitted its Branding Report on December 17, 2009.

We wish to thank the Region's stakeholders who participated in the brand development process through interviews, meetings and written responses. Region stakeholders are those individuals and groups who have a vested interest in the success of the Region, Approximately 250 individuals from the Region were contacted by mail and email to attend the town-hall meetings and participate in one-on-one conversations to assist in identifying North Central's brand characteristics, Those stakeholders who participated provided strong representation of the diverse interests of the Region, giving the branding initiative sufficient perspective and guidance to allow us to proceed confidently with a brand launch.

Coinciding with the development of this Strategic Marketing Plan is the development of a creative concept – including a logo and slogan – which will be used by Region stakeholders when executing this newly developed brand.

The purpose of this Strategic Marketing Plan is to:

- Provide goals and objectives for the launch of logo and slogan, and overall brand;
- Outline the target audiences – both internal and external;
- List key messages;
- Provide a list, according to priorities, of items for implementation of the new brand visual identity;



- Provide recommendations, according to priorities, for launch events and materials; and
- Provide recommendations for a long-term strategy to encourage stakeholder participation and engagement in ongoing brand development.

It also becomes important to note that the launch of this brand – including the logo, slogan and key messages – is only the beginning, not the end. Although the launch is an important step as it creates excitement and momentum within the Region, sustainable branding requires much more time to develop into something real and meaningful. This is where the hard work begins and where every communication between stakeholders and their audience must continue to reinforce the brand, day to day.

The use and continued creation of the brand is also something that relies heavily on stakeholder buy-in. People will turn to the leadership within the Region to see whether this is a true brand or just the unveiling of a logo. It is essential for the Region's individuals and organizations to make decisions that are consistent with the brand messaging and communicate them in all instances with their audiences.



## BACKGROUND

During its research for the North Central brand, Tap reviewed existing reports and studies from stakeholders in the Region, and also invited these stakeholders to provide input as to the Region's brand identity – that is, the qualities and characteristics of the Region that would give it a competitive advantage in attracting the target audiences to visit, live and invest.

The consultation included:

- Individual interviews (in person or via phone) with 36 participants;
- Four town-hall meetings (Shellbrook, Christopher Lake, Birch Hills and Prince Albert); and
- Review of 11 relevant reports and studies and 26 web sites.

In total, we received input from 78 key stakeholders from the Region, representing at least 20 different communities, businesses and organizations.

Following the research outlined above, Tap prepared a Branding Report which identified the key messages of the Region's brand.

Also submitted to North Central were name and slogan recommendations, which have been approved. The approved name is North Central Enterprise Region (usually to be referred to as North Central) for the following reasons:

- The name for the Region has to apply to a multitude of different companies and organizations, in many sectors of tourism and economic development.
- Both the words "North" and "Central" are strong, positive words with the connotations that communicate the brand identity expressed through consultation with the stakeholders. "North" connotes adventure, unspoiled wilderness, newness, resources and major development potential. "Central" connotes accessibility, connectivity, being "at the hub", "where the action is" and "the meeting place," which harkens to our historic significance.



- Given that North and Central have these preferred connotations, they also immediately identify the location of our region within Saskatchewan. To use any other descriptor, such as “Discovery Region” means we will have to expend significant investment, over time, before anyone will ever know where we are. This is avoided by the use of North Central.
- The name will most often be used in conjunction with other brands, and we do not want to be in conflict with these. We are not replacing or rebranding any existing brands for any of our stakeholders. Entities within our region such as Elk Ridge Resort, Town of Spiritwood, Northern Lights Casino, City of Prince Albert or Prince Albert National Park will continue to develop and promote their own particular brand. We believe these brands would be much more willing to share their space with another brand that helps to identify where they are, rather than possibly competing with a description of what they are.
- North Central as a name has staying power. It will be just as relevant in 50 years as it is today. A different descriptor may grow tired or seem outdated over time.
- The place brand names that work best are those that concentrate on geography rather than mood or other descriptors. Names such as “Napa” or “Okanagan” are all natural names for a geographic area. Unfortunately, our Region has no such traditional geographic identifier, such as a valley.
- North Central is inclusive of all our stakeholders. We must remember that not all our stakeholders are in boreal forest, or by a river or lake. We are fortunate to have tremendous historic sites that better fit under the “central” than the “north” descriptor – but work best, in fact, as “North Central”. Furthermore – and unlike a specific product or service – our brand development does not and cannot focus on one or two particular attributes.

In addition to the name, Tap also recommended the slogan for North Central:

*Within reach. Beyond expectation.*



This slogan – or theme – captures the principal brand messages expressed during the brand identity meetings and interviews with stakeholders. That is, the North Central Region is the ideal place to experience and access Northern Saskatchewan, while at the same time remaining connected. The branding consultation clearly pointed out the attractiveness of the Region as a place that is at once accessible – in terms of distance, technology and affordability – but also puts you in touch with nature, different cultures, and history. This slogan sends the message that you can come here and be welcome here – but that what you find will exceed what you were hoping for. The slogan applies as much to tourism as it does to other areas of economic development. Just as importantly, it emphasizes the unique juxtaposition of the words in our name, which tells people we are both “North” and “Central” – we are both “beyond” and “within.”

In the development of the slogan, several options were developed and tested with selected individuals from outside the Region and the province. By far the most popular choice was *Within reach. Beyond expectation.*



## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives have been identified by Tap Communications and North Central, for the implementation and launch of the newly defined brand:

### Goals:

- Introduce the newly identified brand to Region stakeholders, including the general public
- Allow various Region stakeholders to use the brand as part of a common identity
- Enhance the overall marketability of individual businesses and organizations within the Region, by having them apply the North Central brand to their promotional initiatives
- Use the brand identity to attract business and people to the Region
- Provide stakeholders with a long-term strategy that will allow them to continue to use the brand beyond its initial launch stage and well into the future

### Objectives:

For these objectives, we have differentiated what we term “currently active participating stakeholders” (CAPS), who are those who have participated in the branding initiative to date. By September 2010:

- 65% or more CAPS have used the logo and slogan in their own marketing materials
- 75% or more CAPS have incorporated the key messages into their own marketing materials
- 80% or more CAPS report that they were given clear direction on how to use the logo, slogan and key messages and that the brand would be easy to implement into their own marketing materials
- 80% or more CAPS who implemented the logo, slogan and key messages report that they feel it helped to support their business/organization and that it enhanced their marketing efforts



- 85% or more key CAPS report that they plan to use (or continue to use) the logo, slogan and key messages in the future
- 20% or more of Region stakeholders who did not participate in the branding process have demonstrated interest in using the logo, slogan and key messages in their materials since its launch.



## TARGET AUDIENCE

The **primary internal** target audience for the brand launch is Region Stakeholders.

This primary group is an internal audience who will “deliver the brand”. These include companies and organizations related to:

- Tourism
- Economic Development
- Municipal Government
- Businesses
- First Nations and Métis
- Mining
- Agriculture
- Forestry
- Manufacturing
- Retail

The **primary external target** audience for the brand launch will be people and businesses outside the Region, who are interested in investing, locating, working or vacationing in Western Canada, and particularly Saskatchewan. This secondary audience is those who will be receptive to the key brand messages.



## KEY MESSAGES

The following four key messages have been established for North Central. Stakeholders should be well-versed in these key messages, as the use of the brand will go far beyond use of the logo and will extend to all areas including stakeholder actions, language in marketing materials, use of imagery, and indeed anything involved with the interaction with external target audiences.

- **Hub of the North**

We are clearly perceived as the main service area for northern Saskatchewan – the “north - south meeting place”. The phrase “gateway to the north” has been used for many years to describe the City of Prince Albert. There is significant potential, especially in the resource industries such as mining and forestry, for future development. The area is also the centre for many different government organizations, notably in health and education.

- **Saskatchewan’s Premiere All-Season Resort Destination**

We have a distinct competitive advantage in offering first-class, all-season resort destinations. Some of the province’s best-known tourism attractions – including Prince Albert National Park and Batoche – are located here. The Region benefits from being in the transition zone from prairie to parkland to boreal forest. The Region is easily accessible for visitors from within Saskatchewan and beyond. That, combined, with the diversity of attractions, makes North Central an ideal place for touring and vacationing.

- **A Canadian Focal Point for Aboriginal Culture, Advancement and Partnership**

The Region is home to Canada’s largest First Nation Tribal Council – Prince Albert Grand Council – as well as Muskoday First Nation and James Smith First Nation. Within the next ten years, Prince Albert is predicted to have the highest percentage Aboriginal population – 50% - of any urban centre in Canada. There are significant initiatives, planned or existing, being developed by and with First Nation and Métis peoples.



- **Affordable Choices for a Desired Lifestyle**

The growing number of retiring baby boomers who still want to remain active will find this Region attractive, and we are already witnessing those who have moved to the Region after living and working in larger urban centres. Another significant group is the “Next Generation”, also known as “Gen Y”, who share many of the same desires to be in a more natural environment, but still be technologically, and globally, connected to and in proximity to “big city” amenities. A major advantage compared to other places is North Central’s affordability.



## LAUNCH CAMPAIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

When launching the brand (using the logo, slogan and key messages) to the target audiences, Tap recommends that it is launched in two phases. The first should be an internal launch to the Region stakeholders, particularly the CAPS (identified earlier as currently active participating stakeholders) who will promote the North Central brand and deliver it to their target audiences. To fully leverage their participation, North Central must be certain that stakeholders fully understand the brand and its messaging, and can thus use the brand visual identity and key messages to their full advantage.

The timeline chart on the following page should be used as guideline for the execution of the recommended launch deliverables:



COMMUNICATIONS INC.

	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	2011
<b>Internal Launch</b>											
<b>Website</b>											
<b>Brand Summit (known as Tourism Unleashed)</b>	March 24-25										
<b>Letter/Email to stakeholders</b>	Done										
<b>Guide to stakeholders</b>	Done, but continue to distribute all year										
<b>Brand Ambassadors</b>	Identify ambassadors	Once identified, ambassadors would be available year round									
<b>Decals</b>											
<b>External Launch</b>											
<b>Stationery package</b>											
<b>Info. Package to stakeholders</b>	Distribute at Tourism Unleashed and after										
<b>Tradeshows</b>			Design booth	Identify/attend appropriate shows year round							
<b>Print Ads</b>			Identify and place print ads year round but only when appropriate and relevant publications are recognized								
<b>Long-Term Development of the Brand</b>											
<b>Stakeholder meeting</b>											
<b>Semi-annual Brand Report</b>											March 2011
<b>Annual meeting</b>											March 2011



## Internal Launch to Stakeholders

The following recommendations have been prioritized to timeliness and budget considerations:

### Web Site

North Central's website should be updated immediately to be more representative of the new brand. However, rather than think of the site as a particular advertising/marketing medium, it is better to think of it as a mirror of the North Central office itself – a resource for stakeholders, and a useful method to respond to the inquiries of our target audiences. The web site will also serve as a demonstration of the brand messaging and best practices in the use of the web in place branding. Each of the following suggestions for launching the brand can refer to the web site, as well as links to other relevant sites.

The website deserves a refresh in terms of its content, navigation and visual identity. The photos on the website need to be more representative of the people, and the activities of the people, living in this Region. The photos which currently appear on the homepage, for example, feature people of African American decent when the largest cultural group that needs to be represented is First Nations or Metis people.

The new North Central logo should also be displayed prominently on this website. The language should be more reflective of the key messages that have been established and all content should relate to not only economics and enterprise but also to tourism and the lifestyles of people who live in the Region.

Tap's fees to redesign website: \$9,800



### Letter/Email to all Stakeholders

- Prior to the logo/slogan being made public, the key Region stakeholders should be made aware that it is ready to be launched, by way of a letter sent on behalf of North Central.
- A letter and follow-up email should be sent to all Region stakeholders inviting them to attend the Brand Summit (if applicable).

Tap's fees to write letter are included in existing contract

### Brand Summit

- Host a one day Brand Summit for all key Region stakeholders to ensure they are adequately prepared to begin to use the logo, slogan and key messages – and reinforce the brand through everything they do.
- If stakeholders indicate that they do not have the time to commit to a full day event, this brand summit should then be included as part of another event that they would be attending. For example, it can be a 2 hour breakout session that is part of the Tourism Summit, or another North Central hosted event.
- The event may consist of the following:
  - o Introduction by North Central and Tap on the background of this branding project and the research and steps taken to develop the logo, slogan and key messages. A presentation would summarize comments from the information-gathering stage of this process.
  - o A session on how to use the Brand Visual Identity Guide to their advantage and leverage it to its full potential.
  - o A session on the key messages and how to implement them into marketing materials.



- A representative from the Ministry of Enterprise, to speak about Enterprise Regions and the “big picture” objectives for the province.
  - Stakeholders would break out into smaller sub-groups according to their interests and sectors (tourism, industry, etc.) and hold brainstorming sessions about how they can utilize the new brand and implement it into all aspects of their organization so it becomes more than a logo and slogan.
  - The breakout sessions would then be reported on, for large-group discussion.
  - A summary of the Summit would be developed and sent to all participants, as well as other stakeholders upon request.
- Following the Brand Summit, host a reception and encourage all attendees to mingle and discuss the possibilities for the brand. This will also serve to thank attendees for their participation in this process.
  - People unable to attend this event should be able to request and receive information on implementing the new brand.
  - This Brand Summit should be the first in a series of stakeholder engagement events over the next few years. This will encourage continued participation in the initiative and will hold stakeholders accountable to using it correctly.

### **Guide for Stakeholders**

- Helpful suggestions for how individual brands can leverage and support the overall North Central brand.
- Include the logo/style guide so anyone using the logo would use it properly.
- Include examples to illustrate use of the brand identity and key messages.
- Key messages of the brand.



- This guide should be distributed at the Tourism Summit in March 2010 and then made available on North Central's website. Can also be mailed or emailed to all stakeholders.
- This guide would also contain templates for an advertisement and poster that stakeholders can refer to when developing their own materials. This will ensure that the Region's stakeholders use the brand correctly and subsequent marketing materials used by these stakeholders are appropriate.

Tap's fees to prepare guide are included in existing contract

### **Brand Ambassadors**

North Central should identify several individuals who are key Region stakeholders and ask them to formally promote the Region at events, in the media as requested, and to members of the secondary target audience whenever possible. Known as brand ambassadors, these individuals would be leveraged for their strong support and endorsement of the Region as being a great place to live, work and visit. They would share success stories and personal experience with others, and promote specific programs and incentives that attract their audience. Most importantly, they would share their passion for the Region with others.

This positive, unified voice would be the goal of the ambassador program. Marketing materials presented at a trade show, for example, will have maximum effect if they are being handed out by a trusted source.

Individuals to consider as brand ambassadors would be leaders from the business sector and those with strong ties within the community and beyond the Region. By utilizing their personal contacts, and their attendance at out-of-region trade shows, events and conferences, North Central will create valuable word-of-mouth marketing.

Example of appropriate individuals that North Central should approach to be Brand Ambassadors could include (but not limited to):



- Debbie Honch, Prince Albert Tourism
- Jayne Remenda, City PA Councilor; P.A. Downtown Improvement District
- Debra Kuzbik, Operations Manager, Elk Ridge Resort
- Kai Bath, Economic Development Manager, City of Prince Albert
- Carla Flaman, PA National Park
- Bergen Price, CEO of PA Chamber of Commerce
- Johnnie Walker, Corporate Executive Officer, Office of the Prince Albert Grand Council
- Shirley Gange, North Central Board Member, Anglin Lake
- Lance Grosco, Duck Lake Hotel

Brand Ambassadors should be individuals who have been involved in the brand development process and have demonstrated a strong understanding of the purpose and role of being a Brand Ambassador.

The Brand Ambassadors – and that can certainly include North Central Board members – can do much to ensure that the focus stays on long-term branding, in order to create sustainable benefits to leverage the investment in place branding to its fullest advantage.

The number of Brand Ambassadors, to begin, could be as many as 20. A good group to consider would be those who participated the most in the branding initiative to date, as they are already the best ones to fully understand and explain the brand. These individuals should be identified and approached to be ambassadors in March and April 2010 so they can begin to promote the Region by the summer of 2010.

Brand Ambassadors would be prominently identified as such. They would also receive support by way of being able to refer people to the North Central web site. They should be provided or have access to place branding materials, developed by Tap Communications.



### Door/Window Decals

- North Central should provide door and window decals (with the new logo and slogan) to Region stakeholders to post at their businesses and organizations.
- These decals can be produced in May/June of 2010 to continue the momentum of the implementation of the logo and slogan. By providing them to stakeholders and local businesses a few months after the initial launch of the logo and slogan, they will keep the brand top of mind and it will emphasize to stakeholders that a brand is something that is developed over time.

Tap's fees:

\$600 to design and coordinate printing of decals

\$600 cost to print decals (2"x4" qty500)

### **External Launch**

*The following recommendations have been prioritized according to timeliness and budget considerations.*

### Marketing/Stationery Package

- All stationery should be updated to incorporate the new brand visual identity. This would include letterhead, envelopes, and business cards.
- A Powerpoint background and/or presentation should be developed.
- This stationery should be produced and made available for use in April 2010

Deliverables and Tap's fees:

\$2,455 for development of stationery (not inc. printing)

\$920 for development of Powerpoint background



### Information Package to Relevant Organizations

- Organizations such as Tourism Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association (SEDA) – and other organizations identified by North Central – should be informed of the new North Central brand and overall strategies. They should be provided with the informational package, beginning in March 2010 and throughout the year.

There are no fees associated with this package, as the materials are those previously developed

### Tradeshow

- North Central should partner with local stakeholders within the Region to attend tradeshows, to demonstrate a strong presence on behalf of the Region.
- Instead of each group having a separate booth, all booths would be secured together under the umbrella of North Central and the new brand, so they have strength in numbers.
- All the stakeholders would promote their individual organizations and businesses, but having them all under the North Central umbrella would add interest, and the people attending the tradeshows would be able to fully appreciate the Region and everything it has to offer.
- Appropriate tradeshows to participate in should be sought throughout the year, and attendance at these tradeshows can take place in any time of the year.

\$4,000 - \$8,000 Tap's fees to develop a trade show booth

Production costs vary significantly depending on the booth specs, but are anticipated to be \$4,000 - \$10,000



## Long-Term Development of the Brand

*The following recommendations have been prioritized based on timeliness and budget considerations.*

### September 2010 Stakeholder Meeting

- A meeting with all key Region stakeholders should be held in September 2010 to discuss how the implementation of the logo, slogan and key messages has been progressing over the previous six months.
- An evaluation of the usage of the brand should take place, including a survey to determine whether the objectives had been met.
- This also presents an opportunity to discuss what has been working, and what hasn't, and suggest new ideas to encourage continued use.

Tap would be happy to assist with the coordination of this stakeholder meeting as a part of the Pilot Program monthly contract.

### Semi-Annual Brand Report

- North Central should compile, semi-annually, a brief report on the successful adoption and use of the brand messages Region-wide. This could include examples of how stakeholders continued to promote their own specific brands, while at the same time contributing to the North Central brand.

If Tap were engaged in the Pilot Program monthly contract with North Central, this report would be part of those fees.



### Annual Stakeholder Meetings

- To encourage Region stakeholders to actively use the brand in the long term and ensure that use of it does not diminish, North Central should hold annual meetings with key Region stakeholders.
- The purpose of these meetings is to maintain interest in the brand, determine what has been successful in using it and what hasn't been, and continually suggest new and fresh ideas to utilize the brand to stakeholders' full advantage.
- A survey should be given each year to compare usage and comments.



## MEASUREMENT

Measurement and evaluation should be conducted periodically following the launch of the logo, slogan and key messages to ensure objectives are being met.

The following tactics for measurement are recommended:

- At the September 2010 meeting with key Region stakeholders, distribute a survey to determine if:
  - At least 65% of current actively participating stakeholders (CAPS) have used the logo and slogan in their own marketing materials.
  - At least 75% of CAPS have incorporated the key messages into their own marketing materials.
  - At least 80% of CAPS report that they were given clear direction on how to use the logo, slogan and key messages and that the brand would be easy to implement into their own marketing materials.
  - At least 80% of CAPS who implemented the logo, slogan and key messages report that they feel it helped to support their business/organization and that it enhanced their marketing efforts. Ask additional long-answer questions about how it enhanced their efforts.
  - At least 85% of CAPS report that they plan to use (or continue to use) the logo, slogan and key messages in the future.
- For those stakeholders who were initially contacted to be part of the research and development of the brand identity but chose not to participate, an email survey should be sent to them to determine whether their interest in the brand had increased since the launch. They should also be asked if they have used the logo, slogan and key messages in their marketing materials since the launch.



## TOWARD THE BRAND

North Central has a solid opportunity to develop branding that goes far beyond the “logo of the month” approach. To be successful, and indeed a model of place branding excellence, North Central needs to view all branding documents and planning as living documents, open to change, as long as the commitment to building a consistent brand remains strong.

The most significant threat to place branding is the diversity of stakeholders. It has been acknowledged in the initial research, by several different stakeholders, that efforts in the past have been thwarted by the inability to “see the bigger picture” and thus to build silos rather than bridges. The key to working together is the demonstration of place branding excellence by the leaders within the Region.

With this in mind, North Central should seek to build its brand on the solid ground of best marketing practices and unwavering commitment.

The launch is not a conclusion to our branding initiative. It is the first step.