

# Marine Tourism Management Recommendations for the Wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* National Historic Site (WET NHS)

## RESEARCH REPORT

Stephanie E. Potter

Margaret E. Johnston

Jackie Dawson



**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY



**uOttawa**

March, 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the Hamlet of Gjoa Haven, the Franklin Interim Advisory Committee, Parks Canada, and those who participated in, guided, and supported this research.

The authors are grateful for the financial support provided by the Marine Environment Observation Prediction and Response Network (MEOPAR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

**Photos by:** Tamara Tarasoff/Parks Canada (cover, container on Parks Canada's barge); Parks Canada (scuba diver, barge above the HMS *Erebus*); Stephanie Potter (Gjoa Haven); Jason Franson/The Canadian Press (cruise ship).

**Recommended citation:** Potter, S., Johnston, M. E., & Dawson, J. (2020). Marine tourism management recommendations for the Wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* National Historic Site: Research Report (Report). Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON.

**For more information, please see:** Potter, S. (2020). Towards marine tourism management recommendations for the Wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* National Historic Site, Nunavut, Canada (Master's thesis). Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON.

**Contact:** Stephanie Potter – [sepotter@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:sepotter@lakeheadu.ca) or  
Dr. Margaret Johnston – [mejohnst@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:mejohnst@lakeheadu.ca)





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Melting sea ice is transforming the Canadian Arctic. With access to “unexplored” waters, increasing numbers of tourists aboard cruise ships and pleasure craft are venturing farther into the Canadian Arctic seeking unique natural and cultural experiences.<sup>1,2</sup> While tourism growth presents opportunities for the region, there are concerns about potential negative impacts.

The two Franklin wrecks, the HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror*, were recently located in shallow waters of Nunavut’s Northwest Passage. Despite the complex and challenging environment in which they rest, it is expected that the Franklin wreck sites will become popular tourist attractions.

This research examined marine tourism management concerns and “best” practices in relation to the *Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site* (WET NHS). This report provides context-specific management recommendations for the WET NHS to help support its protection and enjoyment by future generations, and the benefit of local Inuit communities.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



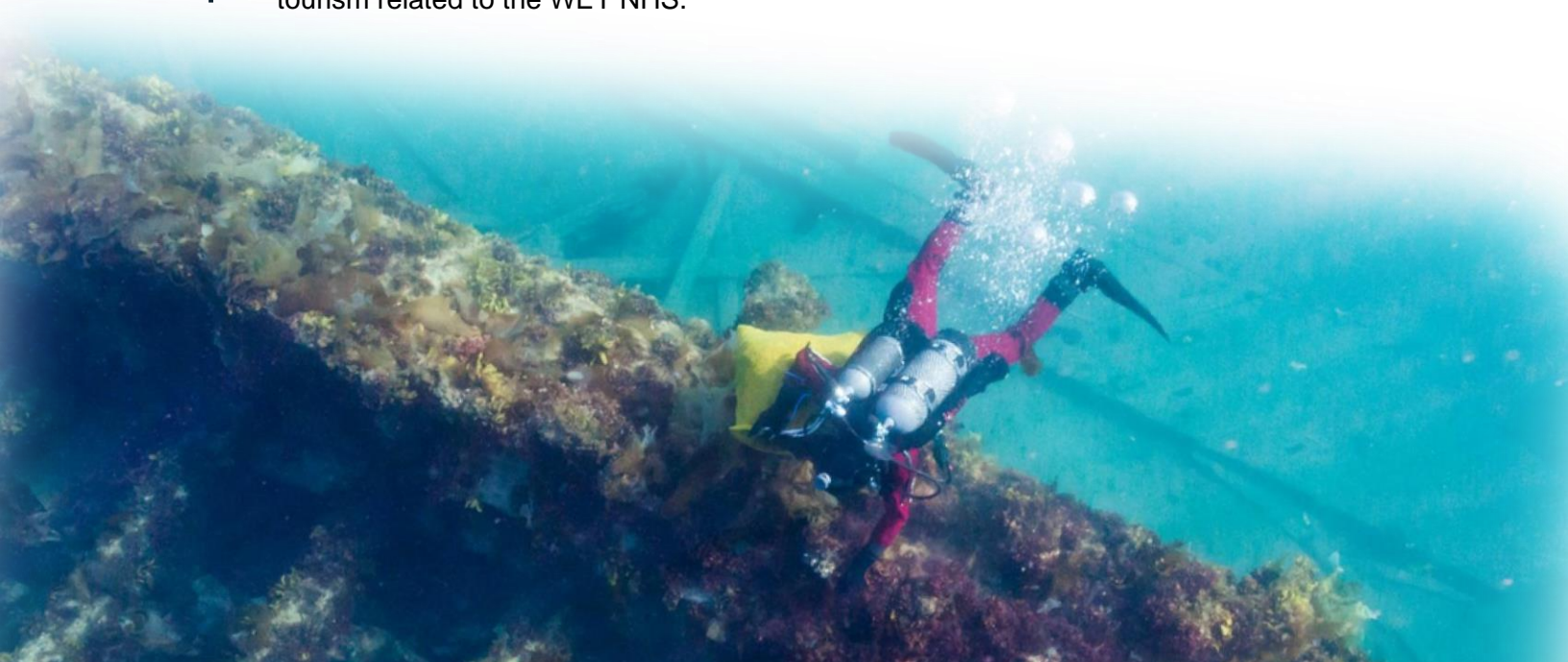
Describe key marine tourism management concerns that need to be addressed for the management of the WET NHS.



Identify Arctic and shipwreck tourism management “best” practices that have resolved similar concerns, and inform context-specific management strategies for the WET NHS.



Understand practices and strategies that are appropriate for the management of marine tourism related to the WET NHS.



## BACKGROUND

Over the past 25 years, climate change-induced increases in open water have resulted in growing numbers of:

- **Commercial cruise ships:** primarily adventures cruises carrying 100-200 passengers
- **Pleasure crafts:** recreation vessels varying from small sailboats to 100m mega-yachts

Locating the wrecks of HMS *Erebus* and HMS *Terror* off the coast of Qikiqtaaluk (King William Island) in 2014 and 2016, respectively, added another dimension to the challenging context of marine tourism management in the

Canadian Arctic – there lacks oversight and management of tourism in the Canadian Arctic's vast, complex, and rapidly-changing environment.<sup>3,4,5</sup> These concerns are immediately relevant to the Franklin shipwrecks.

The historic wrecks are jointly owned and cooperatively managed by Parks Canada and Inuit as the *Wrecks of HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site* (WET NHS), under the guidance of the Franklin Interim Advisory Committee (FIAC). Public visitation to the WET NHS is currently prohibited but management stakeholders hope to open them for the enjoyment and education of visitors.



# ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

A three-staged approach structured this research. The findings from each follow.

## CATEGORIES OF CONCERN

A meta-analysis identified ten categories of concern related to marine tourism in Nunavut, and seven categories related to shipwreck tourism (Figure 1). These were reduced to four key categories within the scope of the research:

- **Safety and Security:** Ensuring visitor and staff safety and wreck integrity
- **Community Benefit:** Ensuring local benefit
- **Visitor Education:** Ensuring visitor education and engagement, especially concerning Inuit culture and norms, and recreation and scuba diving
- **Products and Operations:** Creating visitor experience products that are unique to the WET NHS and between nearby communities

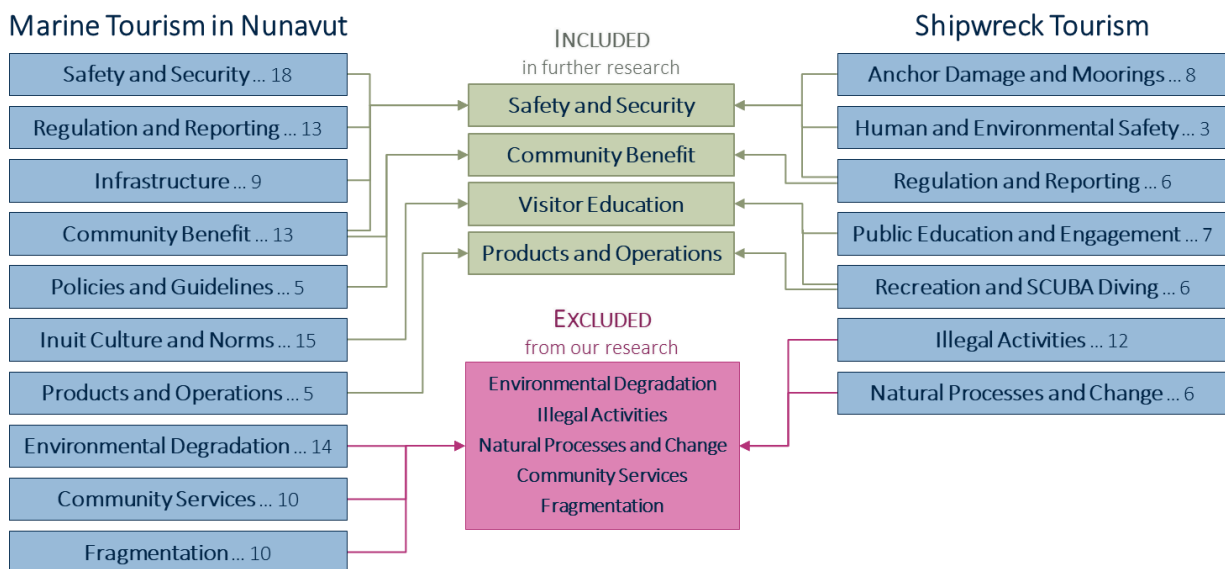


Figure 1: Categories of concern and the frequency they appeared in the literature, and identification of the four key categories included in further analysis.





## MANAGEMENT “BEST” PRACTICES

A second meta-analysis identified management “best” practices that successfully address similar management concerns around the world.

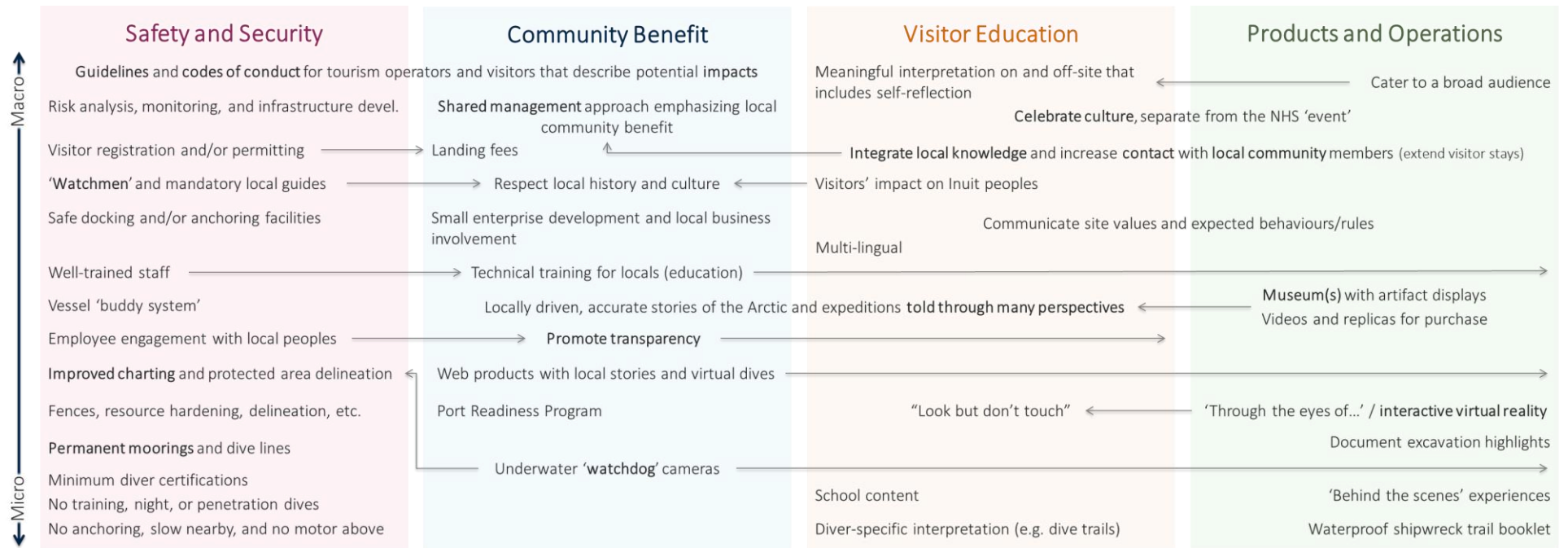


Figure 2: Summary of the interconnectedness of management “best” practices. The arrows exhibit related approaches and how they address multiple key categories of concern.



## EXPERT FEEDBACK FROM THE FRANKLIN INTERIM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (FIAC)

Six members of the FIAC provided expert feedback on the feasibility of applying the management “best” practices to address concerns specific to the WET NHS.

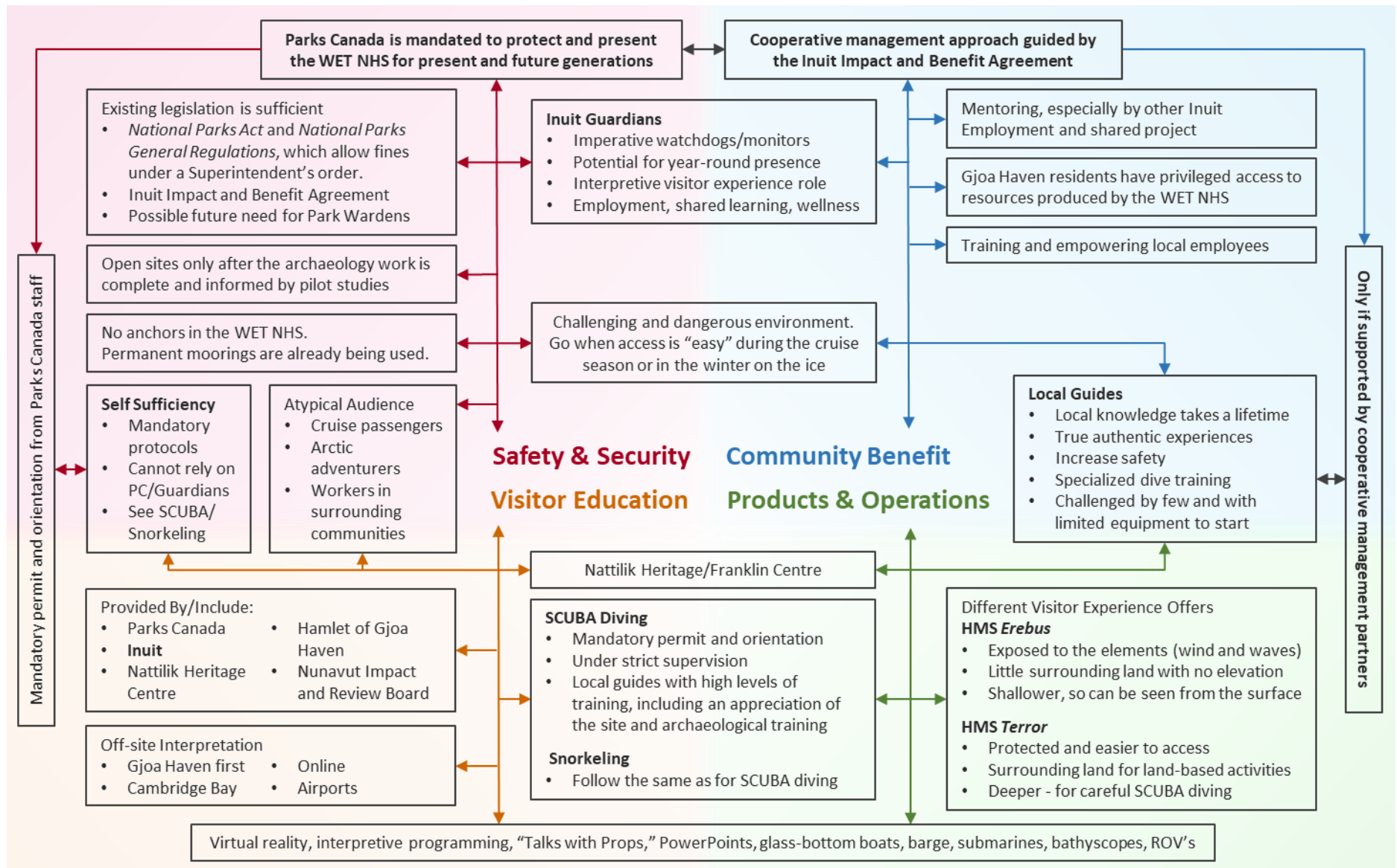


Figure 3: Summary of expert feedback from the FIAC.

# CONTEXT-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Table 1. Context-specific marine tourism management recommendations for the WET NHS.

Management Recommendations	Safety & Security	Comm. Benefit	Visitor Edu.	Products & Ops.
<b>Create visitor guidelines and codes of conduct</b>  Visitor guidelines and codes of conduct for the WET NHS and surrounding communities, informing visitors of what practices they should follow to protect the sites and respect/support local communities	•	•	•	•
<b>Prioritize Inuit voices</b>  Inuit should make up most management positions, informing decision and leading interpretation products  Engage, mentor, and employ local Inuit, especially youth		•	•	•
<b>Require local guides and certifications</b>  Require all visitors to hire a local guide (with small groups) to visit the WET NHS. <i>SCUBA Diving</i>  Work towards having local recreational SCUBA diving guides who maintain advanced, shipwreck, cold water, and dry suit certification and have site-specific archaeological training  Require all clients to have minimum certifications, e.g. advanced, cold water, and dry suit  Develop a “look but don’t touch” ethic that voluntarily encourages visitors not to approach the wrecks  Diver-specific education, such as pre-dive checklists, guidelines, and interpretive guides	•	•		•
<b>Develop anchoring restrictions</b>  Prohibit anchoring within the WET NHS. Provide alternatives such as permanent moorings at the wrecks, safe attachments to the tourism barge (see below) and moorings in nearby safe harbours for smaller vessels  Chart safe paths of travel within and around the WET NHS and update nautical charts with the site boundaries and other important locations within it	•			•
<b>Expand the Inuit Guardian Program</b>  Expand and fund the Inuit Guardian Program to include the winter months  Install underwater “watchdog” cameras to monitor the wrecks and provide live views for visitor experience products	•	•		•



Table 1 (continued). Context-specific marine tourism management recommendations for the WET NHS.

Management Recommendations	Safety & Security	Comm. Benefit	Visitor Edu.	Products & Ops.
<b>Develop a tourism barge</b>  A summer on-site product at the wreck of HMS <i>Erebus</i> where small vessels can attach themselves alongside and board the barge for interpretation products, to view the wreck below, and interact with Inuit Guardians or other Parks Canada staff  Easier access to the site for visitors with limited mobility or advanced resources like SCUBA gear	•		•	•
<b>Separate conflicting visitor experiences</b>  Spatially or temporally separate potentially conflicting user types, such as SCUBA divers and snorkellers from glass-bottom boats	•			•
<b>Expand the Nattilik Heritage Centre</b>  Artifacts on display and behind the scenes experiences of the artifact packing lab Virtual reality and/or “through the eyes of” experiences Gift shop with unique Franklin souvenirs, replicas, and products from local artists		•	•	•
<b>Develop a visitor guide</b>  A “one-stop-shop” for all WET NHS tourism information, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide businesses</li> <li>• Equipment and training recommended when visiting the WET NHS</li> <li>• Site and community guidelines</li> <li>• Itinerary ideas and/or shipwreck trail visitors can follow to visit locations tied to the WET NHS like Beechey Island, Gjoa Haven and places within like the Nattilik Heritage Centre, the two wreck sites, Cambridge Bay, and other sites tied to the Franklin story</li> </ul> See Gwaii Haanas’ Trip Planner for an example: <a href="https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/visit">https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/visit</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parks Canada site that has a cooperative management approach</li> <li>• A remote and dangerous environment where they highly encourage the use of local guides</li> </ul>	•	•	•	•
<b>Develop an interactive online ArcGIS StoryMap</b>  Online shipwreck trail including sites connected to the Franklin story Spatial story of Inuit place names and associated stories through which Inuit culture and norms are shared See <a href="https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/overview">https://www.esri.com/en-us/arcgis/products/arcgis-storymaps/overview</a>		•	•	•

## CONCLUSION

Climate change is reshaping environmental and social landscapes in the Canadian Arctic.<sup>1,2</sup> While “unexplored” waterways are becoming more accessible and attractive to cruise and pleasure craft tourists,<sup>1,2</sup> there was a lack of research on Arctic marine and shipwreck tourism management to support the ethical and sustainable protection and presentation of the Franklin shipwrecks. This research supports the context-specific management approaches required to work

adaptively within times of rapid change while ensuring benefit to local communities. Key to this success is the integration of interdisciplinary ideas while prioritizing the voices and benefit of local communities – those whose culture and histories are intertwined with the Franklin Expedition and who experience the direct impacts of a changing Arctic climate and growing marine tourism industry.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dawson, J., Pizzolato, L., Howell, S. E., Copland, L., & Johnston, M. E. (2018). Temporal and spatial patterns of ship traffic in the Canadian Arctic from 1990 to 2015. *Arctic*, 71(1), 15-28.

<sup>2</sup> Johnston, M. E., Dawson, J., & Maher, P. T. (2017). Strategic development challenges in marine tourism in Nunavut. *Resources*, 6(3), 91-105.

<sup>3</sup> Johnston, M. E., Dawson, J., Stewart, E. J., & De Souza, E. (2013). Strategies for managing Arctic pleasure craft tourism: A scoping study. A report prepared for Transport Canada. Thunder Bay, Ontario.

<sup>4</sup> Johnston, M. E., Dawson, J., De Souza, E., & Stewart, E. J. (2017). Management challenges for the fastest growing marine shipping sector in Arctic Canada: Pleasure crafts. *Polar Record*, 53(1), 67-78.

<sup>5</sup> Lasserre, F., & Têtu, P. (2015). The cruise tourism industry in the Canadian Arctic: Analysis of activities and perceptions of cruise ship operators. *Polar Record*, 51(1), 24-38.

