

# International Community Congress Report

## Balancing Nature & Commerce in Communities that Neighbour Public Lands

*"This is not about us, it's about those who come after us."*

-Norman Deschampe, presenter and member of Grand Portage, Grand Marais, Gunflint Trail team

*"The conversations this week have been fantastic and have given us a new sense of mission."*

- Jim DeVries, member of the Iron Range team

*"Our goal is to connect people to experiences and connect our countries on a road that binds."*

- Bonnie Hundrieser, member of North Shore Scenic Drive team



## Sponsors

- › Arrowhead Regional Development Commission
- › Atikokan Economic Development Corporation
- › Blandin Foundation
- › City of Thunder Bay
- › Fort William Historical Park
- › Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness
- › Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- › Minnesota Forest Resources Council
- › National Park Service
- › Northeast Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnership of the University of Minnesota
- › Ontario Parks
- › Quetico Foundation
- › Quetico Superior Foundation
- › United States Forest Service
- › United States National Park Service

## Summary

In October 2011, over 90 community leaders from Minnesota and Ontario gathered in Thunder Bay and Grand Portage to develop strategies for creating sustainable economies and promoting sustainable public lands. Ten community teams – four from Minnesota, three from Ontario, and three with binational membership – participated. Each team developed a concrete action plan with a timeline for completion.

## Innovative & Collaborative

- Multi-day forum and training event
- Participation was by community teams
- Diverse sectors represented within each team
- Collaborative international workshop
- New working relationships fostered throughout the entire crossborder region
- Local and national presenters
- Longitudinal evaluation will measure results over time



## Diversity of Leadership

Each team was required to have an elected leader and a public lands manager. Team members included land managers from the US National Parks, US Forest Service, Ontario Provincial Parks, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, county commissioners, a Tribal Chairman, city and township elected officials, a university chancellor, a former member of Canadian Parliament, a mining executive, and a leaders from number of small businesses, environmental groups, motor users, and non-profit organizations.

## Concrete Results & Action Plans

Each of the ten teams emerged from the Congress with a concrete, workable action plan to improve the sustainability of their individual economies and the broader Heart of the Continent region as a whole. Each team also created a timeline for completion:

- **New City of Ranier** team will develop a community map that highlights opportunities for visitors.
- **Municipality of Neebing** team will reopen a local park.
- **Connecting Volunteers to the Heart of the Continent** will develop a region-wide website clearing house for volunteer opportunities.

Other action plans included developing a web app for a new trail, better using the scenic byway to connect Duluth and Thunder Bay as sister cities, developing a "path of the paddle" as part of the Trans Canada trail, creating a marketing plan for Voyageurs National Park, organizing a familiarization tour around the Heart of the Continent, education to connect local residents to the land, and developing a county history trail.

