



branding **niagara**

Niagara Original. This is our regional brand, the positioning and design platform upon which we will author our unique story to tell to the world.

'N' is...

... first and foremost a symbol for an important, authentic place



... represents a unique way of thinking, living and doing business

... flexible creative platform designed to spur an integrated communications style for the region

... is a quality product or service designation, a badge of honor, a unifying force

The letter n.

For some people in this area, it might only represent the 14th letter of the alphabet. But for leaders in Niagara's tourism and economic development sectors, it's a way to get people talking about the region and the great things it has to offer, especially in ways they might never have thought of.

If those in Niagara's economic sectors, including tourism, manufacturing, agriculture, history and culture, work together, they will have a stronger, more focused voice that will propel the message that Niagara is a great, original place to visit and in which to invest. The message will resonate in places where people haven't previously thought of Niagara, and in ways people hadn't formerly considered the region.

Branding, therefore, becomes very important.

Branding Niagara as a whole is a complex and adventurous project, and, to be successful, the brand needs to be innovative and flexible in order to fit across the spectrum of industries located here. Branding can also become a unifier, and unity is something Niagara needs more of.

The Niagara Original brand not only expresses what the region thinks of itself, and what the world thinks of this region, but will also show what this area aspires to.

According to Patrick Gedge, Chief Executive Officer of the Niagara Economic Development Corporation, everyone has a

brand whether they have actively created one or not.

"A brand is really a convenient way to describe how people perceive you. That perception may include good things and not so good things. The fundamental question is, are you totally satisfied with the brand perception you have and don't want to do anything about it? Or, do you want to affect your brand's perception so you can achieve your business goals in the future?"

To date, Niagara's business and investment brand has not been particularly strong or well defined. In terms of industry, Niagara is well known for tourism, agriculture and viticulture, but many believe the region has not diversified its image and is, therefore, not top of mind as a good location for other types of industry or investment.

In August 2005, the Ontario government worked with the tourism industry in Niagara on the Premier-ranked Tourism Destination Framework for the Niagara Region, identifying its tourism-related strengths and weaknesses.

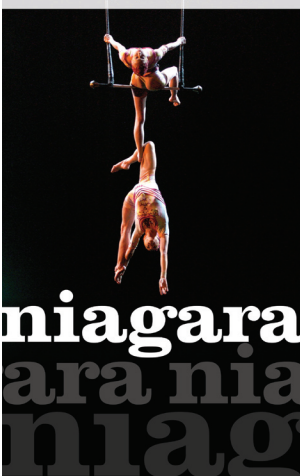
From that report, the local tourism industry created the Niagara Tourism Strategy, which was released in the fall of 2006. The findings identified the need to brand Niagara as a top priority. At that time, regional council was examining the same issue from an economic development point of view and identified the goal

"It's absolutely critical that we define "Niagara" as a place and leverage the value in that name. I think "Niagara Original" has enormous potential. I've always believed the maxim that you should pay nothing for a patent, but be prepared to pay whatever it takes for a brand."

Rudi Kroeker, President and CEO, Whiting Equipment Canada

original act

Custom underwater lifts designed and manufactured by Niagara's Handing Specialty above Cirque du Soleil's incredible "O" cast to perform impossible feats in, on and above a 1.5 million-gallon pool at the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas.



niagara
ara niagara
niagara



original play

Award-winning Silicon Knights of Niagara is one of the largest independent game developers in the world. This guild of talented individuals creates original video game experiences that resonate with gamers worldwide by combining the very best of technology, art, audio, story, game play design and original content.



niagara
ara niagara
niagara



original thinking

Celebrated as one of Canada's Top 10 Life Science Companies in 2007, Niagara's Norgen Biotech is recognized as a role model for innovation in developing world-class DNA, RNA and protein sample preparation technologies.



niagara
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"We were impressed with the development work behind the concept and feel that it's an idea that will build a credible - and marketable - image of Niagara for tourism, business development and the Niagara lifestyle."

Jim Williams,
Chairman, The Niagara Parks
Commission

of branding Niagara for business development as priority in Council's 2007-2011 business plan. Building on these initiatives, an alliance formed between Destination Niagara, an association that consists of tourism managers, owners and operators, the Niagara Economic Development Corporation and other industry partners.

The group issued a request for proposals in June 2007, and Toronto-based Cundari SFP, which has worked on place branding for cities such as Washington, D.C., Raleigh, N.C., and Calgary, Alta., was selected.

The brand development process included one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, group interviews with leaders from Niagara's 12 municipalities and workshops with industry leaders. Further, more than 1,600 interviews with travelers in New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, the Greater Toronto Area, eastern Ontario and Quebec were conducted to discover what travellers thought of Niagara.

The results were informative.

According to the external research findings, Niagara is perceived as a short-term destination, meaning people plan to come for a short getaway, not a longer vacation. On the positive side, the region over-delivers on its product versus its perception, meaning once people get here, they are bowled over by how many fantastic things there are to do.

"There's an incredible before and after effect," said Christopher Blake, project facilitator for Destination Niagara. "They appreciate the diversity of things to see and do in Niagara. But we're not getting the word out about the remarkable scope of the Niagara experience."

Equally interesting is that many people believe coming to Niagara Falls, NY would be a similar experience to visiting Niagara, and that Ontario is not that different than other northeastern U.S. destinations.

"Rather than let the existing perception of Niagara continue, we want to take a proactive approach on how we are perceived so, at the end of the day, there's more to invest into Niagara and that helps the economy," Gedge, of the NEDC, said.

"Business leaders do not think of us as a business community. They think of us as a tourism destination. What they're telling us is that when businesses are thinking about expanding their business, they're not thinking about here."

Luckily, Niagara is starting off on the right foot. There is instant recognition to the name, Gedge said.

"We have the opportunity to take what they know as a tourism destination and experience to talk about our very successful business community," he said.

To encourage visitors to stay longer and to get businesses to invest in Niagara, those in the economic development industry need to work together to create a message, or brand, that will accomplish that aim and build common messaging with research-based ideas.

The Niagara Original brand will create a uniform vehicle for businesses and entrepreneurs to showcase the brand's four main attributes: Vividness, Inventiveness, Abundance and Accessibility.

Niagara offers exciting and dramatic experiences. Businesses do not want to locate in a dull, uninteresting place. They want to be part of a vivid, vibrant business community. »

original=

abundant
authentic
beginnings
history
inventive
one-of-a-kind
rare
surprising
unexpected
unique



There is a sense of innovation and inventiveness to the region, with many businesses and citizens thinking creatively outside the box.

Many people think Niagara is just a large waterfall, but there are a wide range of activities, from cultural experiences to golf getaways, available year-round. As well, many businesses think Niagara is driven by tourism, but there is a wide-range of successful industries in the peninsula. Manufacturing, which has been a staple of the local economy for more than 100 years, continues to be the region's main economic driver.

In terms of accessibility, Niagara proves again and again to be an easy place for tourists to get to. And, the region offers multi-modal transportation to industries, from the Welland Canal and rail lines to major highways that will get goods and services across North America quickly.

To inform businesses and tourists about all the things Niagara offers, a brand logo has been created. Niagara Original. The small letter n, available in a rainbow of colours and patterns, and the word "Original" can be used on marketing materials, advertisements or items to let people know about all the unique, one-of-a-kind, rare, inventive, surprising and historic locations and businesses that reside here.

Gedge said the brand and the logo and its associated language, attributes and graphics will provide a common way for businesses to talk about their assets.

"What it's about is that it's used consistently in the marketplace.

People start to see something special about Niagara and that we have much more than they ever thought about, whether that's in tourism, industry, manufacturing or agriculture," he said.

Gedge said if one examines what makes a successful brand, it comes down to three things - consistency, consistency and consistency.

"With such a flexible brand platform, we can meet with business, agriculture and tourism leaders and talk about how to use the brand platform so we educate the outside world about the assets we have in Niagara that they are not aware we have right now," he said.

"It really grabbed me as soon as I saw it. I got it. "Original" says so much, in just one word, about what Niagara was, is and can be. It's a great concept for the greater good of Niagara."

Perry Johnson, Proprietor,
The Stone Road Grille, Niagara-on-the-Lake

To help move the Niagara Original brand forward, Gedge said those involved in the initiative will meet with companies to discuss why branding is important and how relevant it could be to an individual operator or business.

"Developing and implementing a brand is not

a short-term exercise. We're working with people throughout Niagara and getting them to understand how the new brand platform will help them or best represent them," he said.

"We don't want people to use the brand to be nice, but because, ultimately, it will be a good business proposition ... This is not about the next six months or year. We are laying the foundation for the next five years at least. We are positioning the marketplace to get people to think about Niagara in ways that are different than the current perceptions." **nrs**