

LIVING THE DREAM

Photos courtesy Vaughn McIntyre



Discovery Map's first Canadian franchisee, Vaughn McIntyre, serves New Brunswick's Charlotte County.

Unusual Franchises: Put Your Clients On The Map



In addition to distributing maps, McIntyre maintains a large-format display near St. Andrews' waterfront.

BY PETER SAUNDERS

First developed in 1974 for Vermont's ski resort towns, Discovery Map International is—as the name might suggest—a franchise system that prints customized maps for tourists and earns its revenue through local advertising.

“Our franchisees have a different journey than those with other systems,” says Peter Hans, president. “Many only work seasonally, some are retired and others are parents who want to tailor their work schedule around their kids, but they all engage with their community, nurture their business and are aggressive with distribution to tourist info centres and other key sites in their area.”

While each franchise may be small, the franchisor centralizes high-volume production of the maps, having refined the process over time.

“We print 16 to 17 million maps a year,” says Hans. “They are whimsical and hearken back to a simpler time, but we also create web-based maps, which use search engine optimization (SEO), and we will soon relaunch our app to take advantage of augmented reality (AR).”

The first Canadian franchisee is Vaughn McIntyre, who serves New Brunswick's Charlotte County, including the tourist town of St. Andrews and Grand Manan Island.

“I am originally from Saint John, N.B., and worked in Toronto for more than 20 years in marketing and development for computer companies,” he explains. “When I moved back east, I got a gig in tourism development and cruise ship marketing. One of the most successful nearby ports is in Bar Harbor, Me., where I picked up a Discovery Map and realized it was something we needed, too.”

In fact, by launching a Discovery Map franchise for Charlotte County, he was able to pull its seven communities together as a jointly promoted tourism cluster, similar to Ontario's Muskoka Region.

“My territory is 6,400 km² (2,471 sq mi), which is the largest Discovery Map franchise in geographic terms, but I have the shortest print run, 85,000 copies, for a population of just 25,000,” he says. “One thing I do differently from other franchisees is display a large-format map near St. Andrews' waterfront. That has been very successful. I see people using it all the time.”

Next up is Canada's second franchise, set to serve Ontario's Niagara Region, from the wineries and theatres of Niagara-on-the-Lake and to the hotels and casinos of Niagara Falls.

“Canada is still wide open for us,” says Hans. **CBF**

