



Lessons from the Land and Sea:

**A Best Practices Guide to
Cultural Ecotourism for Coastal
First Nations of British Columbia**



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Lessons from the Land and Sea is a summary of **Nature Based Tourism and Tenuring Strategy Part I: North and Central Coast Profile** by P. Williams and A. Heidt and **Part II: Best Practices and Case Studies** by P. Williams, J. Reilly, A. Heidt and S. Johnsen. To request a copy of the original reports please contact the Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative office.

Lessons from the Land and Sea was produced by the Rainforest Solutions Project, a joint initiative of ForestEthics, Greenpeace, and Sierra Club BC. It was written by Sandra Thomson and designed by Marion Syme.

INTRODUCTION

Shafts of sunlight filter to the forest floor between hanging mist and towering, moss-laden cedar and spruce trees. Ancestral forests such as these blanket the islets and fjords of British Columbia's wild and remote North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Several First Nations have lived on their traditional territories up and down these coasts since time immemorial. To many people around the world this region is known as the Great Bear Rainforest.

Visitors travel to the Great Bear Rainforest from all over the world to experience this vast wilderness and to view and photograph elusive Kermode, or Spirit bears, grizzly bears, whales and coastal wolves. They are equally drawn to experience First Nations cultures - whether to learn seasonal practices such as seaweed harvesting and eulachon fishing, participate in a feast, or watch a traditional dance performance. Historic cultural sites abound, and visitors take tours to explore ancient longhouses and middens, view petroglyphs and listen to coastal legends.

Coastal First Nations territories offer visitors an unlimited array of authentic cultural ecotourism experiences and the demand is growing. Many communities consider cultural ecotourism to be a viable community economic development option that can balance the local need for meaningful income with community values around culture, tradition and a healthy environment.

The Land and Resource Protocol Agreements signed in 2006 by the

Province of British Columbia (BC) and First Nations governments from North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii communities, significantly increase the rightful authority of First Nations to govern and manage their territories. These agreements have committed both parties to protect a third of the Great Bear Rainforest, and implement a more sustainable land management approach, called Ecosystem-Based Management, on remaining lands. Legislated protection of the land base greatly enhances the number of opportunities for cultural ecotourism on the coast.

This best practices guide is testimony to the leadership and success of aboriginal-owned cultural ecotourism ventures. It draws on the experience and lessons learned from some of the most thriving operations in BC and elsewhere in the world. The guide provides coastal First Nations with the best available knowledge to develop cultural ecotourism initiatives in their communities.

Ecosystem-Based Management has two goals: to maintain ecosystem health and to improve human and community well-being. It offers new opportunities for community economic development that strengthen culture and are rooted in First Nations stewardship values.



What you'll find in this Best Practices Guide



Lessons from the Land and Sea: A Best Practices Guide to Cultural Ecotourism for Coastal First Nations of British Columbia is written for elected and hereditary leaders of First Nations communities, elders, economic and business development managers, and resource managers on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

The guide is a summary of the findings and recommendations of a comprehensive technical study “Nature Based Tourism and Tenuring Strategy Part 1: North and Central Coast Profile and Part 2: Best Practices and Case Studies”.

Part 1 of this guide describes the state of the cultural ecotourism industry on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. Part 2 presents four case studies that describe the experiences and lessons learned in leading successful aboriginal cultural ecotourism ventures from BC, Australia and New Zealand. Part 3 provides an overview of the guiding principles of Ecosystem-Based Management used on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii and the best tourism development practices drawn from the case studies and research on other leading tourism initiatives. Cultural ecotourism initiatives that carefully consider these principles and practices will have a higher chance of succeeding.

Part 4 describes some of the current activities and strategies underway for the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii that will provide a solid foundation upon which to build cultural ecotourism. At the end of the guide are additional resources to get started and contact information to provide support along the way.



Part 1

The Cultural Ecotourism Industry on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii

What is Cultural Ecotourism?

Cultural ecotourism can be defined as a tourism experience that depends on a largely undisturbed natural environment, requires a land or water base to operate, and is linked to the First Nations culture shaped by that environment. The outdoors becomes a place for delivering activities and experiences to visitors that incorporate environmental and cultural awareness and conservation. Some examples of cultural ecotourism activities on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii are:

- Cultural site visits
- Traditional dance performances
- Traditional canoe paddling tours
- Environmental or outdoor education
- Sea kayaking expeditions
- Wildlife/nature viewing
- White water rafting
- Yacht cruising

When done appropriately, cultural ecotourism can bring many community benefits. It can provide meaningful jobs, bring revenue to community members, encourage elders to pass along their history and traditions to youth, affirm aboriginal rights and title, create strong partnerships, foster community engagement and protect First Nations cultural and natural values. Intact, healthy ecosystems are the foundation of successful cultural ecotourism.

State of the Cultural Ecotourism Industry on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii

Characteristics of the Cultural Ecotourism Industry in BC:

Small, seasonal operations offering fewer than 5 activities.

Currently less than 3 full-time staff per operation, with additional staff in summer and fall.

Most income is generated from guided activities.

Most costs are for labour, transportation and fuel.

Accommodation is provided as part of a package.

Majority of bookings come from repeat guests.

Marketing tools are brochures, posters and website.

Large proportion of clients are from BC or the US.

Most clients are male and middle aged.

"We live on the land, but we live from the ocean."

Cultural ecotourism is an established sector of the economy on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii. It is considered to have significant room for growth and opportunities for greater contributions to local communities. The majority of the existing commercial recreation tenures offer guided nature viewing, and hunting or fishing camps and lodges.

Several First Nations communities on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii run small owner-operator cultural ecotourism businesses. These small enterprises have mostly been in operation for less than 5 years and serve fewer than 100 clients annually. They offer visitors products such as cultural tours, hut-to-hut kayaking tours, and bear and wildlife viewing. These businesses are described more fully in Part 4 of this guide.

"With so much exciting wildlife to be seen in such a spectacular wilderness, the Spirit Bear tour is quite easily one of the world's top eco-tourist packages."

Kitasoo/Xai'Xais guide and Guest testimonial, Spirit Bear Adventures



Existing Untapped Markets for Cultural Ecotourism Products on the Coast

While short-term trends show a decline in the demand for tourism worldwide, over the long term, indicators are pointing to a growth for cultural tourism in Canada. With better marketing and support, the aboriginal tourism sector in Canada is poised to grow. New initiatives such as the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC have been established to help grow the industry. They are currently showcasing and marketing the sustainable, culturally-rich aboriginal tourism industry in BC, including cultural ecotourism businesses on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

A third of the ecologically intact landscapes on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii are now protected in conservancies that will be collaboratively managed between BC Parks and First Nations communities. This significantly increases the potential for growth in cultural ecotourism on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

Cultural Tourism – Half to full day aboriginal cultural tourism experiences at locations with high tourism traffic such as Prince Rupert. Activities could include guided tours, aboriginal food and feasts, displays and exhibits, and storytelling.



Wildlife Viewing – High growth potential for wildlife viewing of whales, bears and birds. Whale watching is one of the fastest growing wildlife viewing sectors worldwide. Grizzly, Spirit and Black bears make the area a world-class bear-viewing destination.



Kayaking – 2 to 5 day trips in or around First Nations communities. There are many areas on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii considered highly suitable for kayaking.





Part 2

Cultural Ecotourism Case Studies

Turning Vision into Reality

Rooted in strong ethical and sustainability principles, community-based First Nations cultural ecotourism offers a unique product in the tourism market as increasing numbers of visitors look to spend their money in ways that are in line with their values.

The following case studies were chosen because they demonstrate successful cultural ecotourism approaches that are based on tourism best practices and strong principles of sustainability that align with the Ecosystem-Based Management principles being implemented on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.

The Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations' U'mista Cultural Centre and Māori Whale Watch Kaikoura are highly successful owner-operator ventures that train and employ community members.

The Osoyoos Indian Band has developed several joint venture businesses with non-aboriginal partners focused on cultural ecotourism activities. These types of partnerships offer communities a means of overcoming two major roadblocks encountered when setting up a business: access to financial capital and skills, and expertise in management and business.

The final case study describes a co-management model for shared governance and decision-making between the Aboriginal communities who effectively own the land, and Kakadu National Park staff.

These case studies offer practical insights and a few precautionary notes on how to develop a successful cultural ecotourism venture. In the end, a cookie-cutter approach is neither desirable nor practical given the different locations, economic realities, cultural differences, and community capacity on the BC coast. These communities and business leaders have been willing to share their valuable experiences and the lessons they have learned as they turned their vision into reality for their communities.

Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations: Cultural Resurgence as a Focal Point for Local Economic Development

For decades, Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations members worked tirelessly to repatriate potlatch artifacts that were removed and taken to Ottawa in 1922. The U'mista Cultural Society was formed in 1974 with a mandate to ensure the survival of all aspects of the cultural heritage of the Kwakwaka'wakw people. U'mista means "the return of something important". The repatriation of the potlatch artifacts in 1980 became a significant focal point for cultural resurgence and the beginning of local tourism activities.

Soon after repatriation, the U'mista Cultural Society opened the U'mista Cultural Centre as a place to house the artifacts. The Centre is one of the longest-operating and most successful First Nations cultural facilities in BC. It is a modern museum and cultural education facility, offering an extensive art gallery and gift shop, traditional dance performances, guided museum tours and opportunities to taste local cuisine.

The U'mista Cultural Society offers experiences such as guided ethnobotany tours, paddling in a traditional cedar canoe, and self-guided hikes along maintained trails. The U'mista Cultural Centre has become an education centre for both tourists and Kwakwaka'wakw members alike. Visitors learn proper protocol for visiting cultural sites and have a chance to purchase Kwakwaka'wakw arts and crafts.

The U'mista Cultural Society provides tourism training programs tailored to Kwakwaka'wakw members, including courses on outdoor guiding, marketing



and entrepreneurial business development. These and other activities have improved the quality of U'mista's tourism experiences and their aboriginal tourism market profile has increased.

Recently, the Wi'la'mola Accord has been established with the purpose of nurturing cultural renaissance and economic revival through joint tourism business ventures with experienced, ethical local operators. Wi'la'mola means "we are all travelling together". Bringing together the cultural expertise of the Kwakwaka'wakw people and the successful experience of business operators, high-quality cultural tourism products are being produced that can meet the social and economic objectives of the First Nations community, business operators, and visitors. The accord is supported by 'Namgis First Nation Government, the Kwakwaka'wakw Tribal Council, Kwakwaka'wakw chiefs and selected tourism operators.

Unique Tourism Features:

Kwakwaka'wakw art and culture is showcased.

The natural environment is relatively intact and offers a diverse ecology.

A variety of ecotourism activities are available including whale watching, sea kayaking, sport fishing, and diving.

The area is easy to access - tourists can visit by car, bus, private yacht, small cruise ship and private aircraft.

More visitors are arriving to the area each year due to escalating numbers of cultural ecotourism offerings, increased awareness of the abundance of archeological sites, and a growing interest in aboriginal cultural tourism products.



Lessons from Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations

Culture must come first. Creating tourism opportunities for the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations has been secondary to ensuring the integrity of the precious potlatch collection and other cultural artifacts in the territories. Determining what, where and how tourists would experience Kwakwaka'wakw culture was planned through considerable dialogue with elders and other community members.

Build economic stability by developing partnerships with non-aboriginal tourism operators. The Wi'la'mola Accord builds tourism alliances as a means to strengthen capacity, economic stability and pride.

Take the time to learn as you go. Ensuring tourism activities are sustainable and protect cultural and natural values means investing the time up front to make sure your community is knowledgeable and has the right information and training.

Inform visitors of First Nations protocols. All visitors and tour operators in the Kwakwaka'wakw traditional territory are made aware of the community's expectations. This awareness helps build respect for the culture and strengthens recognition of traditional territories.

Benefits to the Community

- Local Kwakwaka'wakw people are trained and employed in tourism ventures. More than 35 Kwakwaka'wakw members earn a large part of their annual income from cultural ecotourism-related jobs such as guiding whale watching and nature tours, providing accommodation for tourists, selling art, building trails and preparing food.
- Return of the Kwakwaka'wakw potlatch artifacts has helped bring the community together and empowered them to move forward.
- Kwakwaka'wakw elders and community members were consulted before decisions were made on cultural ecotourism activities. Elders decided what cultural features and areas would be shared with the public and what would be kept private, meaning that sacred sites and cultural traditions are protected.
- The Alert Bay and 'Namgis municipalities share the costs of maintaining a municipal dock that can service small cruise ships and a water transportation service to shuttle visitors to the U'mista Cultural Centre, stimulating tourism development throughout the area.
- Traditional dance performances are held at the Centre three times a week. Dancers are paid for their services, and funds are set aside for cultural exchanges for younger children. These performances are generating enthusiasm for cultural practices in young people throughout the community.
- Formal relationships established with local non-aboriginal operators have increased the capacity and expertise of Kwakwaka'wakw members to develop tourism opportunities.

Nimmo Bay Resort and Ecosystem-Based Management

Through his significant involvement in developing the Wi'la'mola Accord, Craig Murray, the owner of Nimmo Bay Resort has strengthened his commitment to get input from the Kwakwaka'wakw on his operations. He has developed an operating plan based on ecosystem-based management principles that includes:

- Levying a fee on guests to support local conservation initiatives
- Providing guidelines to all guests about interacting with surrounding plants and animals
- Buying sustainable products and foods from local suppliers and providing local artists with a venue for international tourists to view their work



Māori-Owned Whale Watch Kaikoura: Award-winning Success in Conservation-based Tourism



“We are a company owned by Māori and proud of it. We are not owing to anyone and have control over ourselves spiritually and economically. We can make decisions without seeking permission from anyone else. We are empowering our people with a vision of the future.”

Wally Stone,
Whale Watch Kaikoura

Up until the early 1980s, the town of Kaikoura relied heavily on New Zealand’s central government for its economic base. The town’s biggest employer was the New Zealand railway. By the mid-80s, a nationwide economic recession and consequent reforms led to significant reductions in the community’s government operations. Kaikoura was left reeling from the cutbacks to economic and social support programs and high unemployment.

Whale Watch Kaikoura began in 1986 as a vision for a cultural ecotourism venture that could respond to these conditions. The obstacles were great, since no mainstream banks would lend money for start-up of the venture. Local Ngati Kuri people pledged their meager

assets and some personal savings to secure a commercial loan from a Māori bank. This was enough to allow the business to operate its first tours in a small dinghy with room for ten people.

The initial response to the tours was promising (3,400 customers). The tour company approached its local tribal authority, the Ngai Tahu Māori Trust Board, and proposed to borrow money for further expansion. The Board agreed and also bought a major share in the company. With co-ownership held by Ngai Tahu Holdings Ltd. and the Kaikoura Charitable Trust, Whale Watch Kaikoura is a 100% Māori-owned enterprise.





Unique Tourism Features:

Māori culture is woven into many of New Zealand's high profile tourism activities and attractions, rather than simply designated as a niche tourism market.

About 22% of all international visitors to New Zealand frequent Māori cultural attractions or activities.

Whale Watch Kaikoura is one of New Zealand's most distinctive, successful and growing tourism adventures.

Tours are offered year round to see giant sperm whales, New Zealand fur seals, pods of dusky dolphins, the endangered wandering albatross, and seasonally, several other whales species.



“As a Māori-owned company, Whale Watch Kaikoura cherishes the twin values of hospitality to visitors and reverence for the natural world. It is a philosophy that embraces people, the land, the sea and all living things as one. Perhaps this is why so many of our visitors tell us our tours provide them with a spiritual experience.”

Whale Watch Kaikoura website

Today, Whale Watch Kaikoura offers tours to more than 40,000 customers annually, the majority from outside New Zealand. The company is also responsible for substantially increasing the number of visitors to the region (1 million annually) and stimulating investment in new accommodation, restaurants and other sea-based tourism ventures. It is now the single largest employer in Kaikoura, employing up to 70 people directly and supporting many extended families during the peak season.

Whale Watch Kaikoura has developed business practices guided by strict conservation policies on how their boats and visitors interact with the whales and their marine environment. The company is proud of the prestigious environmental awards it has received for its commitment to marine conservation.

Lessons from Whale Watch Kaikoura

Governance structures must be transparent and accountable.

Clearly articulated roles for the board, management staff and stakeholders allow the company to operate effectively and efficiently. Transparency and accountability are major tenets of the business. Using business operating structures means the company carries out its activities in a competitive, responsive manner. In this way it achieves its core mandate to be a successful and stable business that empowers its stakeholders.

Innovative thinking can be an important factor for success.

Whale Watch Kaikoura embraces a culture of entrepreneurial drive, rather than guaranteed profits. There is a balance between sound management practices and innovation.

Sound business practices can improve community well-being.

Business success has allowed Whale Watch Kaikoura to focus on Māori empowerment and a commitment to providing training. This has resulted in a more successful business and a healthier community.

Benefits to the Community



- The Māori used their rights and title to ensure that competitors did not take away their market share. When a competitor was granted a permit to begin a similar whale watching enterprise in their region, Ngai Tahu holdings challenged the decision. The New Zealand Court of Appeal upheld Māori rights and title as defined in the Treaty of Waitangi. Longstanding and legally recognized cultural practices and knowledge meant that tribal interests must be protected, including entitlement to a 'reasonable degree of preference'. The company effectively retains a monopoly on whale watching opportunities.
- The company is 100% Māori-owned with ownership split between a holdings company and a Charitable Trust. The Board of Directors makes decisions on a consensus basis ensuring that a variety of Māori voices are heard.
- Whale Watch Kaikoura employs local people and pays the Kaikoura Centre to develop continuing education courses and train staff in marine tourism. This has helped prepare locals to work for them and also to venture off into other tourism-related businesses.
- The company has become more Māori-focused over time, with an ownership structure, philosophy, values and culture that empowers its staff and partners to do more for the Māori community and its people.

Osoyoos Indian Band: Working with Diverse Partners to Achieve Economic Independence

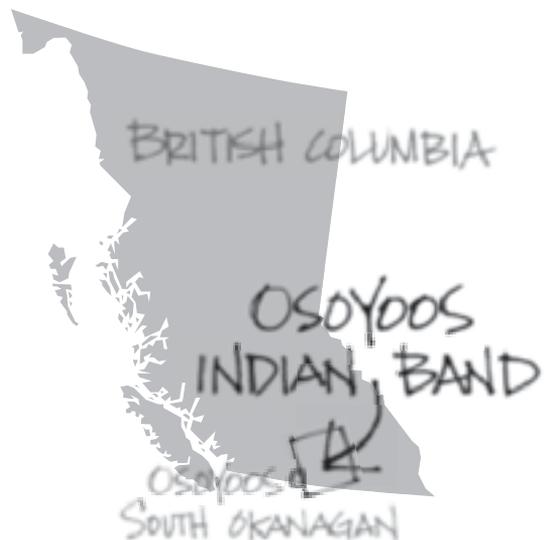
Under the strong, committed leadership of Chief Clarence Louie, the Osoyoos Indian Band has achieved an economic independence virtually unparalleled in BC. From the beginning they sought input both from within and outside of the community. Community consensus on broad business direction was sought through shared decision-making processes such as referendums. They have also established solid partnerships with business, government, and industry experts.

Their joint business ventures have brought numerous benefits to the community. These benefits include job opportunities and training for band members, protection of cultural sites and traditional land uses, and business and real estate revenue. There is virtually no unemployment within the Osoyoos Indian Band.

The Osoyoos Indian Band first opened the Nk'Mip (pronounced 'inka meep') Resort in 1982 with an RV park that provided yurts, tenting and RV pads, and a clubhouse for year-round tourism. It soon established Nk'Mip Cellars, the first aboriginal-owned and -operated winery dedicated to producing high quality wines. The winery is housed in an 18,000 square foot architecturally designed facility that displays First Nations art and artifacts. In 2004, Sonora Dunes Golf Course opened to the public, followed by the launch of the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre and the four-star Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort

and Spa. The Passatempo Restaurant serves meals created using local, indigenous ingredients. The area is becoming a mecca for cultural tourists wanting to experience local cuisine and wine. The Osoyoos Indian Band has tapped into this tourism market, blending wine tourism and First Nations culture in a variety of offerings.

The Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre provides visitors with an authentic and unique experience that promotes respect and understanding of the living culture of the Okanagan people and the desert lands that sustain them. The Osoyoos Indian Band's outdoor interpretive program offers various walks and hikes to view local flora and fauna and the many pictographs found on surrounding cliffs and caves.





Lessons from Osoyoos Indian Band

Unique Tourism Features:

The Osoyoos Indian Band territorial lands protect some of the last large tracts of Canada's only true desert, an endangered ecosystem in Canada, as well as many endangered plant and animal species.

The area has a distinctive geography and Canada's mildest winter climate.

High-quality agricultural land is ideal for growing grapes.

Business partnerships can help achieve economic independence.

With economic self-sufficiency a primary goal, the Osoyoos Indian Band has worked with diverse partners to achieve economic success.

Good business governance means strategic community input and accountability to community members.

The Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation manages its operations effectively by ensuring broad community participation at a strategic planning level, a clear strategic vision, and transparency and accountability to community members and council.

Answers come from both internal and external sources.

The Osoyoos Indian Band has always looked both inside and outside the

community for answers. For example, when determining an adequate level of cultural appropriateness for their tourism activities, they looked first at best practices from other First Nations communities and then consulted their own community on the specific elements.

Consistent leadership helps attain strategic goals. Chief Louie has provided strong leadership, and a long-term vision and dedication to achieving economic self-reliance for his people. By maintaining the confidence of the community for over 20 years, Chief Louie has been able to focus his energies on long-term economic development rather than on any potential internal politics. He has received numerous awards for his success.



Benefits to the Community

- The Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation has developed partnerships with non-aboriginal businesses that are integral to the community receiving a fair share of benefits. These partnerships have been key to establishing the financing and human capital required to make the developments a reality.
- Osoyoos Indian Band members determine what major tourism activities will occur on their lands. Community members vote on proposed strategies through a referendum process. They also determine what activities are culturally appropriate for the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre.
- Osoyoos Indian Band development projects that occur on reserve lands require an environmental impact assessment under federal law. This has ensured that tourism development has protected the fragile natural ecosystems.
- Chief Clarence Louie has promoted the idea that Band members must pursue self-sufficiency while honouring culture and tradition. He believes this results in a healthy, thriving community.

“The Band does not owe its membership dependency. It owes them an opportunity and a chance to become independent.”

Chief Clarence Louie

Kakadu National Park: A Co-Management Model for a Complex Cultural Landscape



The far northern reaches of Australia have been home to Aboriginal people for over 50,000 years. Kakadu National Park is described as a cultural landscape. The spiritual ancestors of the Bininj/Mungguy people shaped it during the Creation Time. The Ancestors journeyed across the country creating the landforms, plants, animals and the Bininj/Mungguy people themselves. They taught them how to live with the land and look after the country.

The idea of protecting these lands as a national park began in the 1960s, partly motivated by the fact that the Australian government was exploring opportunities for uranium mining. The park has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to both natural and cultural heritage. It now hosts over 165,000 visitors each year, with tourists spending an estimated \$58 million annually.

Over half of the land in Kakadu National Park is Aboriginal territory under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, and most of the remaining land is currently under uncontested claim by Aboriginal people. The Director of National Parks manages the Aboriginal-owned lands for National Park purposes under a lease agreement.

In theory, the Kakadu National Park co-management model demonstrates strong government-Aboriginal partnership and good governance. The foundation of all management documents is respect for customary law and tradition. All park management decision-making is collaborative, with the Bininj people holding the majority of seats on the board of directors. The Tourism Management Plan states that the Bininj people formally have control over the activities and endeavours undertaken within the park. The Bininj are consulted around business and tourism decisions, and the park director is required to train and employ as many local people as practical. However, the model is still not yet fully implemented. Work is still required to translate strong policy into successful Aboriginal relationships and economic development.



Lessons from Kakadu National Park

Collaborative decision-making and management must be supported with adequate resources. Kakadu National Park management staff has lacked the capacity and adequate resources to make meaningful progress toward collaborative management. Secure funding to build the capacity of both partners is required to implement policy and plans, and support an effective Aboriginal board of directors.

Building trust takes time. Kakadu National Park directors can only hold a term for two years, leaving insufficient time to build relationships and trust, and delaying real change.

Governments who partner with Aboriginal groups must recognize that building relationships for decision-making takes time.

Done right, culture can be a powerful tourism product.

Incorporating Aboriginal seasonal traditional practices into tourism practices has helped to diversify and expand the tourism products offered.

Unique Tourism Features:

Kakadu National Park protects Aboriginal land that has been inhabited continuously for over 50,000 years; the area is home to the Bininj and Mangguy peoples.

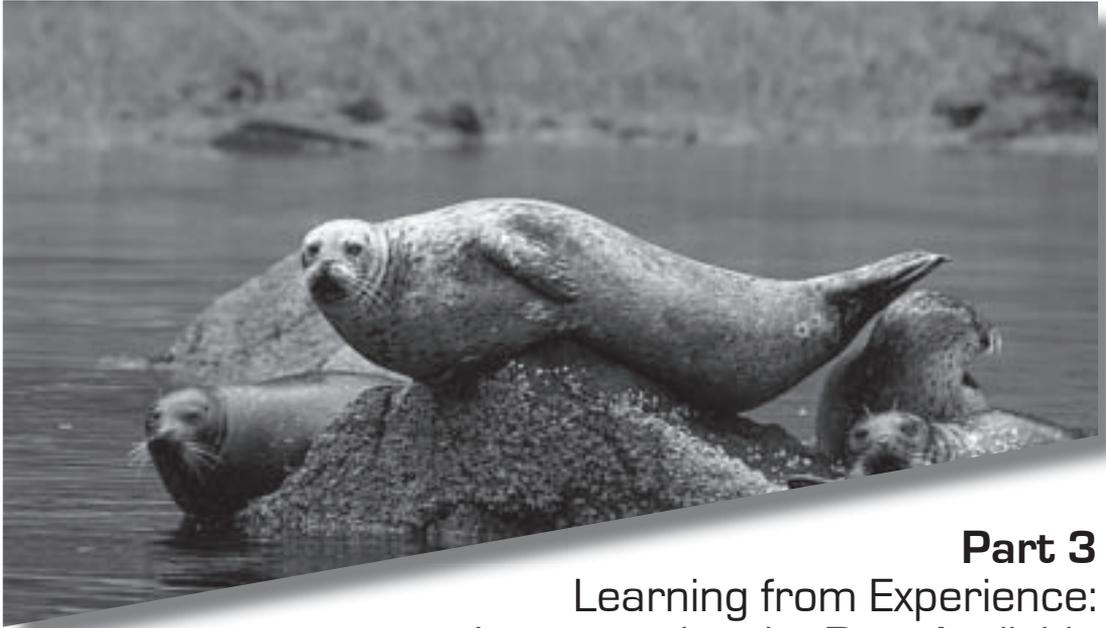
Almost 2,000 hectares in size, the park encompasses a variety of landscapes, including coastline, four river systems, and a variety of landforms, from sandstone plateaus and savannah woodlands to billabongs and mangroves. It provides protection for a diversity of plant and wildlife species.

Aboriginal culture is represented by numerous cave paintings, rock carvings and archaeological sites protected in the park. Some of these sites are estimated to be more than 10,000 years old.

Benefits to the Community

- Cultural and traditional interests of Aboriginal peoples are foundational to all tourism practices in the park.
- Decision-making aims to be collaborative, with the majority of seats on the park board of directors held by Bininj people. Accordingly, there is greater accountability to the local community.
- Tourism marketing is linked to the Bininj's six-season calendar and is respectful of Aboriginal traditions.
- Opportunities exist for more Aboriginal ownership of tourism business.
- User fees are collected by the park administration and a percentage of park income goes to Aboriginal people.





Part 3

Learning from Experience: Incorporating the Best Available Knowledge into Cultural Ecotourism

“Our culture is born of respect, and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us. Like the forests, the roots of our people are intertwined such that the greatest troubles cannot overcome us. We owe our existence to Haida Gwaii, or ‘our lands’. The living generation accepts the responsibility to ensure that our heritage is passed on to following generations.”

History of the Haida Nation,
www.haidanation.ca

Ecosystem-Based Management Principles and Cultural Ecotourism

Coastal First Nations communities recognize the interdependent nature of people, communities and the land. Ecosystem-Based Management was embraced on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii because of its two central goals: maintaining ecosystem health while improving human well-being. These goals align with the First Nations ethic that all things are interdependent. What follows is a brief description of several principles that guide the implementation of Ecosystem-Based Management. The successful cultural ecotourism ventures described in the case studies incorporate similar principles into all aspects of their operations.

Protect the Health of the Environment. Community health depends on the health of the surrounding ecosystems. This means ensuring that the diversity of organisms and all the natural processes are sustained over time. No one can live without the services that ecosystems provide: clean water, plant diversity, wildlife habitat, productive soils, and healthy and reliable sources of food. All aspects of tourism activities must be carefully planned to minimize their impact on the environment.

Improve Community Well-Being.

Well-being means the health and happiness of community members and is strongly linked to the health of the environment. Cultural ecotourism can benefit the community in many ways: provide meaningful jobs that connect people to the land; strengthen the community's interest in traditional values and practices; and provide sustainable revenue to improve the quality of community life.

Sustain Cultures, Communities, and Economies within the Context of Healthy Ecosystems.

A fundamental ethic held by many aboriginal people worldwide is that culture, community, economy and environment are inseparable. This means that cultural ecotourism activities must strive to sustain the health of all elements, not trade off one element for another.

Ensure First Nations Rights and Title are Recognized and Accomodated.

Land and Resource Protocol Agreements were signed in 2006, and subsequent Reconciliation Protocols signed in 2009, by the Province of BC and coastal First Nations governments. These agreements provide a mechanism for governments and others to formally acknowledge First Nations rights and title on their territories. This is an interim solution in the absence of treaties or longer-term relationship.

Apply the Precautionary Principle.

The impacts of our decisions and actions cannot always be predicted. Decisions made now may pose unacceptable risks in the future and so it is always wise to err on the side of caution. It is important to assess risks, monitor effects and impacts, and continually use new information as it becomes available.

Decision-Making must be

Collaborative. Participatory processes must involve everyone who has knowledge and expertise to contribute. Community members should guide decision-making at all steps in the development of a cultural ecotourism initiative. The most successful outcomes are achieved when the best traditional, local and scientific knowledge are integrated into decision-making.

Share Benefits of Ecosystems with

Local Residents. All land and resource decisions will affect local people and businesses. Historically, local First Nations communities have been most impacted by the over-use of resources on their territories while receiving the least benefits in return. Cultural ecotourism activities should provide jobs for community members and share revenue that is generated.



Tourism Best Practices: A Business Approach to Managing Cultural Ecotourism



Many of the preceding case studies incorporate five general best practices in their day-to-day operations: self-governance; sound governance institutions; cultural appropriateness; strong leadership and community engagement; and a strategic approach to development and management.

Ensure Self-Governance Drives Decision-Making – When First Nations communities have the authority over what development approaches to take they are more successful. This applies to matters as diverse as governance structures, resource management, economic development and social services.

Establish Sound Governance Institutions and Good Governance Practices – Capable government institutions are needed for development to take hold. A sound governance institution has consistent rules for decision-making that are transparent and fair, with independent mechanisms for resolving disputes. A strategic vision guides decisions made over the short and long term. Politics are separate from the day-to-day management of business and programs. Good governance practices give legitimacy and voice to the community, and hold the institution accountable to the community and other partners through measurable performance results.

Respect Cultural Appropriateness – Cultural ecotourism objectives must respect the cultural values held by the community to be successful. Benefits can be achieved if an appropriate balance is found between what clients want and what communities feel is appropriate.

Provide Strong Leadership and Engage the Community – Successful cultural ecotourism ventures nurture and support leaders who introduce new ways of doing things, challenge old assumptions, and encourage innovation and creativity. Leaders must have the ability to communicate new visions and inspire people to take action.

Use a Strategic Approach to Development and Ongoing Management – Successful First Nations communities are those that have moved away from quick fix and opportunistic responses to development challenges. Instead they focus on projects driven by a strategic plan that incorporates long-term community priorities, concerns and assets. Many of the case studies presented here started their development without a strategic plan but soon realized the importance of this step. Strategic planning has helped many communities access much needed financial capital and increase the human capacity of their community to support a viable tourism business.



Part 4

Creating the Climate to Expand Cultural Ecotourism Opportunities on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii

Existing cultural ecotourism efforts on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii provide a solid foundation upon which to build and expand opportunities and benefits for First Nations' communities. Several communities already own and operate small cultural ecotourism initiatives. A coordinated regional effort through initiatives such as the Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative can assist communities to market their tourism products, build capacity and attract innovative financing.

Spirit Bear Adventures is a community-based cultural ecotourism business owned and operated by the Kitasoo/Xai'Xais First Nation. The company offers multi-day tours to visit the cultural and natural history of their traditional territory, including wildlife tours to view Spirit bears and grizzly bears. The Kitasoo/Xai'Xais First

Nation has recently constructed the Spirit Bear Lodge in Klemtu to accommodate visitors to the region.

Seashore Charters, owned by Metlakatla First Nation, offers cultural tours and bear-viewing day trips. It serves as many as 7,000 clients each year from cruise ships that stop in Prince Rupert.

The Gitga'at First Nation offers cultural and wildlife educational experiences in their territory. In Hartley Bay, visitors have the opportunity to go on a nutritional plant tour, visit the community cultural centre, and enjoy a traditional Gitga'at feast. They offer tours to visit the community's traditional winter village site, remote longhouses, and petroglyphs. They also offer the chance to participate in clam and seaweed harvests.



“... a fair contractual relationship is needed. It doesn’t work if people are being dictated to in either direction. Relationships must be built on how we can help each other.”

Nature Based Tourism and
Tenuring Strategy, Part II.

The Heiltsuk First Nation, through the Qqs (Eyes) Project Society, operates the Koeye Wilderness lodge, a unique setting for summer culture and science camps for Heiltsuk youth. The purpose of the Qqs Project Society is to open the eyes of young people to their responsibility as stewards of the land and sea that surround them. The lodge is also used for conferences and retreats, as well as some cultural tours and wildlife viewing.

The Haida Heritage Centre at Kaay Llnagaay is an award-winning Aboriginal cultural tourism attraction opened in 2007 on Haida Gwaii. Located on the ancient seaside village site, this oceanfront complex celebrates the unique culture, art and history of the Haida, with museum exhibits and audio-visuals, cultural

tours, a canoe house and carving shed, occasional weaving and bentwood-box workshops, ceremonial events and presentations and a restaurant serving Haida cuisine.

On the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii, several First Nations communities are negotiating benefit-sharing protocol agreements with tourism businesses operating in their territories. The Gitga’at First Nation is actively managing benefit-sharing protocol agreements with several tourism businesses. These protocol agreements will minimize the adverse effects of commercial activities and ensure that communities receive benefits from economic development occurring in their territories.



Negotiating Strategies to Smooth the Way for Cultural Ecotourism on the Coast

Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative leaders are negotiating with the Province of BC to ensure that the necessary institutions, policies, and strategies are in place to smooth the way for First Nations participation in the cultural ecotourism sector. Several strategic goals will improve the likelihood of success for cultural ecotourism and other initiatives on the coast:

- Secure economic investments and funds to develop local community economic development initiatives
- Secure funds for training and capacity building in governance, developing and managing partnerships, and entrepreneurial and business skills
- Negotiate protocols and impact-benefit sharing agreements with operators in the tourism sector
- Establish models for co-managing conservancies
- Negotiate a new strategy for commercial tourism tenure opportunities with the Province

Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative and Aboriginal Tourism BC are currently developing templates to assist First Nations communities to develop benefit-sharing protocol agreements. Agreements should include the following provisions:

- Share decision-making on resource planning and management
- Support funding for monitoring and enforcement in conservancies
- Establish operating guidelines to respect local First Nations customs and traditions, and community preferences regarding areas to use while in the territory
- Increase client awareness of the First Nation, its territory, and cultural practices
- Share revenue with the community and provide employment and training for community members
- Purchase products made by community members
- Establish a process for resolving disputes
- Partner with communities to include and promote cultural ecotourism activities offered by the community
- Protect cultural and archeological sites

There is significant room for growth of cultural ecotourism on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii - growth that will see greater contributions and benefits for local communities. This best practices guide provides the best available knowledge gleaned from indigenous leaders and experienced cultural ecotourism ventures in BC and other parts of the world. An integrated approach to cultural ecotourism development, grounded in Ecosystem-Based Management principles and tourism development best practices, will smooth the way for a thriving conservation-based economy on the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii.



Contact Information

Case Studies

Coastal First Nations Great Bear Initiative

p: 604-696-9889

w: www.coastalfirstnations.ca

Kakadu National Park

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p: +61-8-8938-1120

e: kakadunationalpark@environment.gov.au

w: www.environment.gov.au/parks/kakadu/index.html

Kwakwaka'wakw First Nations,

U'mista Cultural Society

Alert Bay, BC

p: 250-974-5403 or 1-800-690-8222

e: info@umista.ca

w: www.umista.ca

Māori Whale Watch Kaikoura

Kaikoura, New Zealand

p: +64-3-319-7904

e: lisab@whalewatch.co.nz

w: www.whalewatch.co.nz

Osoyoos Indian Band, Nk'Mip Resort

Osoyoos, BC

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w: www.oib.ca/profile.asp

Chief Clarence Louie

e: chief@oib.ca

Osoyoos Indian Band Development Corporation

e: cscott@oib.ca

w: www.oibdc.com

Nk'Mip Resort

p: 1-888-96-NKMIP (65647)

w: www.nkmip.com/about-nkmip.html

Cultural Ecotourism Ventures

Gitga'at First Nation, Tourism Program

Hartley Bay, BC

p: 250-841-2602

w: www.gitgaat.net

Haida Heritage Centre

Skidegate, Haida Gwaii, BC

p: 250-559-7885

e: info@haidaheritagecentre.com

w: www.haidaheritagecentre.com/index.html

Heiltsuk First Nation, Koeye Wilderness Lodge

Bella Bella, BC

p: 250-957-2917

e: larryj@bellabella.net

w: www.koeyelodge.com

Kitasoo/Xai'Xais First Nation, Spirit Bear Adventures

Klemtu, BC

p: 250-839-2346

Toll Free: 1-877-644-2346

e: explore@spiritbear.com

w: www.spiritbear.com

Metlakatla First Nation, Seashore Charters

Prince Rupert, BC

Toll Free: 1-800-667-4393

p: 250-624-5645

e: info@seashorecharters.com

w: www.seashorecharters.com/index.php

Additional Resources

Tools for Managing Cultural Ecotourism Initiatives:

Kangaroo Island – Tourist Optimisation Management Model

Developed by the stakeholders on Kangaroo Island, Australia, the Tourism Optimisation Management Model is used to monitor tourism conditions and make better resource and land management decisions.

Kangaroo Island Council

p: 08 8553 4500 (+61 8 8553 4500)

e: info@tomm.info

w: www.tomm.info

Tourism Codes of Conduct and Certification Programs:

Several tools have been developed in response to the growing demand for more responsible tourism development. Codes of conduct and certification programs translate best practices into a set of credible and recognizable standards that can be easily understood by different users.

BC Wilderness Tourism Association

www.wilderness-tourism.bc.ca

The Rainforest Alliance

www.rainforest-alliance.org/tourism

The International Ecotourism Society

www.ecotourism.org

Other Support

Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC

www.aboriginalbc.com

Aboriginal Tourism BC was established to showcase and promote aboriginal tourism products in BC. Members can showcase their tourism initiatives regionally. The website markets products by providing information on each registered member. The media section has a variety of innovative ways to market and frame business stories.

Tl'azte'en – University of Northern BC Research Partnership

<http://cura.unbc.ca/ecotourism.html>

A research partnership in northern BC that is studying aboriginal ecotourism. The website provides market research studies for northern BC.

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Kakadu National Park; Tourism Northern Territory, Australia

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Koeye Science and Culture Camps, Qqs Project Society

Page 4 and 23:

Tourism BC

Page 6:

Kermode or Spirit Bear, Marlene Liddle

Page 7, 20, 24 and 25:

Doug Neasloss; www.dougneasloss.com

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Sandra Thomson

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Nimmo Bay Resort, www.nimmobay.com

Page 13 (bottom right):

Tourism New Zealand

Page 24:

Heiltsuk ceremonial mask used as a teaching tool for Koeye youth science and nature camps. Rarely seen outside of a Potlatch, Ian McAllister

Page 25:

Seashore Charters; Metlakatla First Nation





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