



Stó:lō Tourism Commission

Warm your heart and enchant your senses among the Stó:lō, the people of the River.

Niche Areas in Aboriginal Tourism

Aboriginal Cultural Tourism is a niche area itself in the Tourism Industry. According to the Canadian Tourism Commission's Strategic Plan 2003-2005 Overview, the product and service tourism demand has changed over the last 5 years. In all researched reports, including The Spirit of 2010 Tourism Strategy, several aspects are contributing to the demand for the unique products and services offered through Canada's Aboriginal Tourism Industry, including:

- The emergence of experience based travel
- An ageing population with more time available for leisure
- A larger amount of disposable income allocated to travel
- Greater air-access to Canada
- Increasingly accessible travel information available via the internet

More tourists are seeking a specific spiritual, cultural or educational experience rather than just a destination. Currently, the range of Canadian tourism products and services is limited to dated experiences targeted at the "generic traveler". As a result of new niche market development, the collaborating niche media and the one-to-one online marketing opportunities, the idea of a generic traveler has become a thing of the past. The Canadian Tourism Commission's Strategic Plan 2003-2005 Overview states the following:

"New travelers, emerging as the result of changing social, economic, and demographic conditions may find innovative products and experiences attractive. Unless the promotional products of the Canadian tourism industry are expanded and experimental products incorporated, the current line of promotional products will perpetuate the negative perceptions of Canada. Not only must these new products be available, but we must strongly position Canada where it is competitive and market ready."

The niche is Aboriginal Cultural Tourism. What is Aboriginal Cultural Tourism?

"A cultural experience that must be tied directly to an Aboriginal person, or group of Aboriginal people."

We have a responsibility to our communities to follow protocol towards sharing our culture. Aboriginal Tourism offers us a unique way to preserve our culture through sharing. The authentic cultural experience should

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therefore be authenticated as a direct result of permission provided by Cultural Keepers.

➤ **Aboriginal Festivals & Ceremonies**

Through research of available reports and direct market interaction at tradeshows and with tourists around BC, I have found that the majority of Travel Agents and Travel Resellers are interested in including Aboriginal cultural experiences and excursions in their itineraries.

Aboriginal Festivals and Events present an excellent opportunity to attract tourists to our different territories. For Festivals and Events to be marketable, we must focus on developing Festivals and Events that happen yearly, not just once. The development of regional Festivals and Events presents opportunities for Aboriginal Tourism providers to work together providing such services as Performance, Transportation, Interpretive Tours, Traditional Cuisine and Feasting, Accommodations, and Traditional Arts and Crafts. A great example of this can be found at www.crabfest.ca. In their second year, the remote village of Gingolx is using Crabfest to market their unique tourism products and services to the world.

➤ **Performing Arts and Storytelling**

We see pictures of our dancers used all over the place to market BC to the world. Yet, in the past, few of the pictures represent advertising on behalf of the performer or dance group. Performing Arts and Storytelling presents many unique business opportunities that fit in well with the 'new traveler' seeking an experience. Sasquatch Tours is taking advantage of this opportunity by providing Interpretive Boat Tours that include songs and storytelling. In addition to these services, Sasquatch Tours offers Feasts and Traditional Performances, effectively involving many of their family members in the business. Still, more opportunities exist in other areas. Consider the following ideas:

2) Dance Groups: Aboriginal Tourism British Columbia is often approached and asked to recommend dance groups or aboriginal performers for Celebrations, Base-ball games and Corporate functions/events. There is great potential for a youth Aboriginal Dance Group to perform at Local Hotels, Event Planners, Airports, BC Ferries, BC Hydro and other Corporate Giants. Things to consider:

- a. The more dancers, the more costs. Keep the group small.

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- b. Professional Attire. Make sure your regalia is meticulous, and the dancers all wear the same underclothes.
- c. Performance and choreography. Practice, then practice some more. Compare your group's performance to other professional competitors.

3) Storytellers: Are you, or your family, storytellers? Consider partnering with Parks Canada, or the Ministry of Forests to share stories of the land, your heritage, and your sites. Share the history of the land with hikers. Partner with a guide to offer walking tours or hiking tours. Offer your services to existing businesses or go on your own. The sky's the limit for talented Storytellers. A great example of an existing partnership with growth potential is Quu'as West Coast Trail Society at www.alberni.net/quuas/trail.htm

➤ **Outdoor/Nature Adventures and Tours**

Hire a storyteller to begin your journey or start off at the longhouse and take your visitors on a cultural journey through time. Give them a traditional craft to take home! Partner with existing businesses, hotels, or offer your service to schools for field trip opportunities, corporate retreats or a corporate teambuilding activity. Here's one not currently being pursued: Market your service to colleges and universities for their Aboriginal Studies or Anthropology Programs! A great example of a successful business in your area is www.sasquatchtours.com.

Other Examples of Outdoor/Nature Adventures and Tours:

- White Water Rafting
- Traditional Canoe
- Kayaking
- Camping in Traditional Accommodations
- Horseback Tour Trips
- Wildlife Viewing – bears are particularly popular
- Fishing
- Wildflowers/Vegetation and Medicine Garden Tours are a high potential area in tourism

➤ **Aboriginal Art Galleries/Crafts and Transportation Services**

BC Aboriginal Arts and crafts are sought after by collectors all over the world. Too many galleries and agents are not owned by our people. Do you have a passion for arts and crafts? Consider a small gallery. Here are some tips for success:

- 1) Market your gallery to transportation service providers. Entertain a whole bus load of tourists in your gallery.



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- 2) Share your culture: Hire a storyteller or dance group to entertain your visitors. Charge admission to the group for the experience. Don't just do a gallery, do an experience.
- 3) Go online. Have your visitors sign a guest book and keep in touch, especially at Christmas. Have your gallery online for international orders.
- 4) Hold workshops and craft demonstrations. This can keep your retail store busy between tour groups. Market to schools, universities, colleges, and locally.
- 5) Partner with a coffee or teashop. Share traditional teas and offer traditional cuisine.
- 6) Partner with your local Adventure Tourism Providers. They can have a day out hiking followed by a traditional meal or snack while being entertained by dancers or artists doing demonstrations!

➤ **Aboriginal Interpretation Centres and Museums**

I have been all over BC, visiting many museums along the way. In my experience, Aboriginal Owned and Operated museums are a breath of fresh air compared to the usual displays. Our people are passionate about our history and culture. Interpretive Centres and Museums offer a place to honor our ancestors and protect our valued artifacts. There are many examples of successful Centres and Museums all over BC. Here are some of the unique aspects that give them their success:

- 1) Aboriginal Cultural Guides, storytellers, interpreters
- 2) Cuisine www.quwutsun.ca (Daily Salmon Barbeque)
- 3) Conference Centres
- 4) Workshops and Demonstrations
- 5) Gift Shops
- 6) Totem Poles, traditional Pit-Houses
- 7) Multimedia Theatres sharing songs and stories

A successful Centre exists in your area! Visit www.xaytem.ca

XA:YTEM (pronounced "HAY-tum") is the Halq'emeylem name for a giant rock situated on an ancient river terrace overlooking the Fraser River. The oral history of the Sto:lo people has preserved their ancestor's stories about this extraordinary monolith and its great spiritual significance. In recent years, archaeologists have found evidence of a large village having been here some 9,000 years ago! It is the oldest known dwelling site in British Columbia and investigations continue to reveal more artifacts here. The magnificent Xa:ytem Longhouse, built in the traditional way with



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massive timbers and cedar planking, now stands near the rock. As well as displaying superb examples of crafts and artwork, the centre welcomes group and school tours for cultural interpretation programs and workshops.

XA:YTEM

35087 Lougheed Highway

Mission, B.C.

V2V 6T1

➤ **Community Tours and Historical Site Tours**

Do you know the stories of the historical sites in your community? Would you like to learn? Consider community walks, nature walks, medicine walks. Take tourists to visit ancient pictographs and visit other powerful historic sites. Again, partner with your local businesses or market directly through your local Chamber of Commerce to share the historical value of your lands with community business owners and other residents. Take groups of Students, Bus Groups. Partner with local galleries as a start and/or finish to the walk! This is an opportunity for someone to run a simple small scale business. It offers opportunity for a home-based office and only requires one or two people to run it.

➤ **Aboriginal Themed Restaurants, Feast Houses, Food Services Businesses**

People all over the world are becoming more health conscious, more educated, and are developing discerning pallets. Now, as never before, a strong market exists and is growing for Traditional Aboriginal cuisine. Consider the following:

- A Feast house
- Aboriginal cuisine catering services
- Smoke house
- Aboriginal deli with traditional smoked fish, meats, preserves and traditional teas
- Sell a cook-book with traditional methods of preserving berries, smoking fish, barbequing salmon and other delicacies
- Sell piquin Sticks so your guests can have their own salmon barbeque when they get home! (Remember to put your logo and web-site on the piquin Stick so they know where to order more!!)

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A successful Catering Company exists in the Sto:lo Territory:

Sto:lo Catering, owned by Cathy Ned and her husband Ken Cropley, of Sumas First Nation. Specializing in Traditional Salmon Barbecues, hot and cold buffets, mobile kitchen. kcropley@shaw.ca

A great example of a successful Feast House can be found in Vancouver at www.liliget.com

➤ **Accommodation Services**

In BC we are lacking Aboriginal owned and themed accommodations. The best example available is Kootenay Wilderness Retreat at www.kootenaywilderness.com. One of our most unique, culturally rich products in BC! Recently, Kootenay Wilderness Tours has brilliantly opened a Traditional TeePee Village. One of the most common requests I hear is to stay in a traditional accommodation or village for a couple of nights. The accommodation services sector has much potential in our communities for offering conference space, partnering with local aboriginal tourism service providers, offering employment to members of our community and youth. Spas and Retreats offer are a high potential area for Aboriginal Tourism and offers the key niche component "not just a place to stay, but an experience to last a life-time!" Consider the following niche services an Aboriginal Accommodation could provide.

- 1) Central location to help market other Aboriginal Tourism Services in the area
- 2) Allows travel agents to book up to 10 rooms per season for their itineraries
- 3) Nightly storytelling
- 4) Healing services
- 5) Traditionally styled fireplaces
- 6) Traditionally designed architecture
- 7) On-site traditional village setting for a 2 night adventure get away
- 8) Dinner theatre including dance groups and storytellers
- 9) On-site spa
- 10) Traditionally styled steam room (designed after a sweat lodge)
- 11) Opportunity to experience a traditional sweat

The list goes on here. Accommodation services is a key sector to be developed by our communities. There is no shortage of private investors interested in participating in ventures such as these.

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Accommodation services is a sector requiring community and band council support.

The Key to success in Aboriginal Tourism lies in our ability to work together. Any business you decide to start has partnership opportunities within your Aboriginal community and the local Non-aboriginal community. Consider partnerships at the same time as considering which business to start. If it's a teahouse, partner with someone interested in owning a gallery/gift shop. Or approach an existing business and talk about partnership opportunities.