Working with Aboriginal Business: Building Partnerships in Tourism

Tourism Industry Association of BC
Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC
Nimmo Bay Resort
‘Namgis First Nation

‘Signs of Lekwungen’ bronze spindle-whorls stamp
Victoria’s Inner Harbour with a First Nations presence
In Today’s Workshop

• Walt Judas  
  CEO of Tourism Industry Association of BC

• Lillian Hunt  
  former guide, U’mista Cultural Centre;  
  Director, Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC,

• Craig Murray  
  Owner-operator, Nimmo Bay Resort

• Randy Bell  
  Manager of training, ‘Namgis First Nation

• Convenor – Bruce Whyte, Ph.D. (cand.), Sr. Tourism Development Officer, Tourism Policy Branch, Economic Development Division, Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
Building Partnerships

• Tourism is a top ‘gateway’ for Aboriginal entry to the world of business

• The world wants Aboriginal culture

• Aboriginal communities control key resources
The BC Tourism Landscape

- 19,000+ (small) businesses
- 270,000 employees
- Projected 100,000 new workers needed by 2020
The BC Tourism Landscape

- Film, High Tech & Tourism – BC’s strongest performers in 2015
- Visitor economy larger than agriculture, forestry
The BC Tourism Landscape

✓ Record 5 million international overnight visitors
✓ +4.5% Asia
✓ +3.8% Europe
✓ +9.6% USA
The BC Tourism Landscape

✓ YVR passengers = 20.3 million in 2015, +5%
✓ BC Ferries passengers = +4%
✓ Vehicles = +4.5%
The BC Tourism Landscape

✓ Tourism Revenues = $14.6 billion in 2015
✓ $7.1 billion in real GDP
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

- Aboriginal businesses = $561 million in GDP
- $12 million in tax revenues
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✔ BC Aboriginal tourism sector = $45-50 million in revenues
✔ 1500 Aboriginal tourism businesses in Canada; 300 in BC or about 4% of all tourism businesses in province
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✓ Majority of Aboriginal businesses retained or increased revenues over past three years
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

- Over half have been in business more than 12 years
- 61% operate year-round
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✔ Aboriginal businesses employ average of 8 full-time staff
✔ 67% operated by Aboriginals
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✓ 3.7 million visitors to Aboriginal businesses in BC
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✓ Majority of Aboriginal tourism experiences are add-ons, versus sole purpose for travel
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✓ Majority of visitors to Aboriginal tourism operators are domestic; USA and Europe reasonably strong
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

- Aboriginal experiences include: performances, displays, events, tours
The Aboriginal Tourism Landscape

✓ Profile of visitor to Aboriginal experience – majority female, middle aged to senior, highly educated, high income
Profile of Aboriginal Tourism Visitor
Cultural Explorer

✓ Defined by their love of constant travel and continuous opportunities to embrace, discover and immerse themselves in the culture, people and settings of the places they visit
Profile of Aboriginal Tourism Visitor
Cultural Explorer

✓ Personality traits: Open, accepting, non-traditional, enthusiastic, creative
Cultural Sampling: They believe that other cultures have a lot to teach them
Importance of Spontaneity: They enjoy an element of surprise and welcome unexpected circumstances that enrich their lives.
Profile of Aboriginal Tourism Visitor

Cultural Explorer

✓ Pursuit of Novelty: Trying out new things is thrilling
The Aboriginal Tourism Opportunity

✔ BC home to approximately 200 First Nations bands... one-third of all of Canada
The Aboriginal Tourism Opportunity

- Approximately 100% growth in BC over last 5 years
- Tour operators predict moderate growth in the Aboriginal tourism market
TIABC Resources

☑ Partnerships, Advocacy, Marketing, Destination Development
Lillian Hunt

- Aboriginal tourism is hot, and growing
  - Doubled operators/revenues 2006-2012

- AtBC tools/programs to help
  - Product Development
  - Skills Development
  - Marketing

- Long Tradition of Hospitality: Distributing blankets at early 1900s Potlatch
Tools to Protect Culture

- Authentic Aboriginal-tours and products
- Authentic Indigenous – authentic arts and crafts

Launch of Authentic Indigenous program at Royal BC Museum
The View from the Aboriginal Side

• The need for partners on the Aboriginal side
• Challenge and opportunity with FN culture
• Working with the neighbours – starting the Wi’la’mola Accord with Nimmo Bay
• Working toward mutual support

Territory of the Kwakwala-speaking First Nations includes some of the BC coast’s most outstanding scenic beauty, wildlife and Aboriginal culture.
A Case: the Wi’la’mola Accord

• Tourism operators and First Nations joined to work together in the north Island region
• Drafted Wi’la’mola Accord to set protocols
• Deal aims to provide benefits to both parties
• Working with the neighbours
What’s in this for Business?

Nimmo Bay Resort guest on paddle-board catches spray at Wispy Falls
Randy Bell believes culture can help Aboriginal youth find a place in the modern world.
Randy Bell

Randy Bell, 'Namgis artist and protocol expert, believes culture can help Aboriginal youth find a place in the modern world.
Oolichan – A Very Old Business

The grease or oil of Oolichan (called ṭl̓i’na in Kwak’wala) was the most sought-after food of West Coast First Nations... a very special sauce!
Culture, Youth and the Future

Images from:
http://www.beyondnootka.com/articles/woss.html
‘Namgis dancers perform for guests at Nimmo Bay Resort
Conclusion: What we Learned

- Tourism is a large and growing industry
- There is a large and growing demand for FN culture
- Business needs FN partners to connect with market demand, gain access to key resources
- FNs need business partners for finance, expertise and access to markets
- This is a clear opportunity for win-win.
Questions?

“A good place to live is a good place to visit.”*

*SOURCE: Dr. Brian P. White,
‘A tourism organisational structure for the Alberni Valley,’

Sunset over Alert Bay