

5th Annual First Citizens' Forum

Best Western Forster's Convention Centre

Kamloops, B.C., November 14th, 2007.

Aboriginal Cultural Tourism

Report prepared by:

the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

& the Ministry of Tourism Sport and the Arts



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MINISTERS' MESSAGE

First Citizens' Forum Report

**Message from the Honourable Michael de Jong
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation**

**Honourable Stan Hagen
Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts**

We are pleased to deliver the 2007 First Citizens' Forum Report. The Report outlines recommendations and key priorities of the Province of British Columbia and the Aboriginal cultural tourism industry.

A special thank you is extended to our gracious hosts, the Tk'emlups (Kamloops) Indian Band and Chief Shane Gottfriedson who welcomed us to their Traditional Territory.

At this year's forum we were honoured to have Chief Sophie Pierre of the St. Mary's Indian Band co-chair the forum. We enjoyed the participation of Elders, Chiefs, and Aboriginal youth from the Youth Ambassadorship Program and we were fortunate to have talented facilitators and the expertise of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of B.C. to guide us in the planning of a successful forum. Thank you for your hard work.

The 2007 First Citizens' Forum produced valuable dialogue, inspired by the Aboriginal Tourism BC 2005 Blueprint Strategy, on the future of British Columbia's important Aboriginal tourism industry. Aboriginal leaders and youth, industry experts, and representatives of the Province identified important marketing and partnership opportunities, industry best practices, education and training strategies, and cultural protocols.

As the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, BC 150 celebrations, and the 2008 North American Indigenous Games approach, Aboriginal communities are enjoying unprecedented opportunities for showcasing their traditions, telling

their stories, and displaying their talents. Aboriginal culture in British Columbia is admired internationally and represents a significant attraction for tourists from across Canada and around the world. Revenues from the sector are expected to be impressive, increasing to as much as \$50 million annually by 2012.

Since embarking on a New Relationship in 2005, the Province and Aboriginal communities across B.C. have focused on common goals that include closing the social and economic gaps that separate Aboriginal people from other British Columbians. Cultural tourism can play a valuable role in building vibrant, self-sufficient Aboriginal economies that showcase the rich heritage of First Nations and Métis communities across British Columbia.

All signs point to a successful future for Aboriginal tourism in British Columbia, nurtured by the commitment and strong entrepreneurial spirit of Aboriginal people. By celebrating their great cultures that make all British Columbians proud, Aboriginal people tell a fascinating story. The world is ready to listen.



Honourable Michael de Jong
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation



Honourable Stan Hagen
Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts

INTRODUCTION

"In the next five years we hope the [Aboriginal tourism] industry will grow from \$35 million to over \$50 million. If we can capitalize on the opportunities that exist, if we can find a way to point out the strength and the vibrancy of Aboriginal cultures throughout British Columbia, we'll build a stronger Province and a stronger future for our kids and our grandkids." **Premier Gordon Campbell.**

On November 13th, 2007, delegates from First Nation and Métis communities, Aboriginal political groups, Aboriginal leaders, business owners and operators, universities, colleges and provincial government came together for the 5th Annual First Citizens' Forum with Minister Michael de Jong and Minister Stan Hagen. The objective was to celebrate the release of the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy¹ and to discuss the unique opportunities being created for First Nations and Métis Peoples in British Columbia to showcase their culture on a world stage.

Within the context of the North American Indigenous Games, 2010 Winter Olympic, Paralympics Games and launch of the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy (Blueprint Strategy), the growing demand for Aboriginal cultural tourism products and services is an unprecedented opportunity for First Nations communities. According to Brenda Baptiste (Chair, Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia): "if Aboriginal tourism as an industry succeeds, then our First Nations communities will succeed...not only [will] you eradicate poverty by creating an economy within our communities, but you will create a stronger social fabric, and create social capital by teaching your youth the culture and allowing them to share it with visitors". Currently, more than 6,400 people across the province are employed in Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses and at least 65 new Aboriginal cultural tourism products are presently in development. The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia (ATBC) estimates that "about 90 percent of international tour operators want to incorporate Aboriginal cultural tourism products into their packages." Internationally, visitors to British Columbia are eager to learn about the Aboriginal peoples of this land, their stories, traditions, territories and cultures.

¹ In September 2007, the Province committed \$5 million toward the implementation of the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy to support the growth of the Aboriginal tourism sector leading up to and beyond the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

The 5th Annual First Citizens' Forum invited delegates to speak to their hopes and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities that face this new and thriving sector of the economy. The following three themes, drawn from the Blueprint Strategy, were identified as topics for the breakout sessions and the focus of the discussions: Culture and Tourism, Education and Training, and Marketing and Product Development. Participants chose one of three groups and were asked to provide recommendations to the Province; feedback that will support the implementation of the Blueprint Strategy and build a stronger and more coordinated approach to nurturing this important part of the tourism industry. Below are highlights of those discussions.

Culture and Tourism

For most tourists who visit British Columbia, the images, histories, stories and knowledge of Aboriginal peoples are some of the most inspiring, fascinating and engaging characteristics of this province. For many delegates to the Forum, showcasing their cultures, languages and traditions within a business model, while respecting and adhering to traditional ways and cultural protocols, offers some unique challenges. Given the importance of both economic development and cultural revitalisation, delegates engaged in discussion around how to find the balance between these two aspects of community development. Participants discussed the challenge of developing culturally authentic tourism products while maintaining the honour and integrity of one's culture. Participants also acknowledged that the process of recognizing the great wealth and potential which exists within their own cultures is a critical first step towards building a successful tourism "product".

Delegates discussed the different types of businesses that communities could consider, including: wildlife viewing; canoe adventure tours; trail rides and hunts; arts and cultural center development; culinary and other certified Aboriginal products; and, resort development. The assurance that correct cultural protocols be developed and followed was a key issue for participants. Guaranteeing the role of Elders as advisors in the development of a community-based tourism initiative was expressed as a pre-requisite to ensuring a successful and sustainable project. Building wider non-Aboriginal sensitivity towards community practice and traditions was also a key issue. Delegates emphasized that the development of a strong Aboriginal cultural tourism industry will depend on respect and sensitivity amongst both the non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal community.

Education and Training

Of utmost importance, education and training require a vision, and Chief Sophie Pierre spoke to this during her remarks to the Forum delegates, emphasising that, "any type of business opportunity, whether it's in tourism, mining or forestry, starts with a vision. It starts with people who have a vision and who believe in themselves, who believe that they can accomplish what they're putting their mind to." Having this vision and believing in your capacity to create change requires that the tools you need to build are available. Delegates recognized the encouraging developments in tourism education and training that have emerged in recent years, in particular the "new college and university tourism programs that have been developed around the province...the success of the [Squamish Nation Youth] ambassador program", and the development of innovative programming such as the "Aboriginal cuisine pilot programs".

The Forum provided an opportunity for delegates to discuss the successes and challenges experienced by those working to build their own skills, training and education within the tourism field. A priority for many delegates was the need for more robust coordination and partnership amongst the sometimes "fragmented array of tourism education and training programming". In particular, participants emphasised the need for "an inter-agency protocol and a comprehensive Aboriginal tourism education and training plan". In the context of this approach, the need to "encourage the federal government to buy into the overall Aboriginal cultural tourism blueprint strategy" was a critical pre-requisite to realizing the overall objectives of the Blueprint Strategy. Further, delegates recommended that the Province consider creating "a provincial plan to implement and promote the Aboriginal Tourism Education and Training Framework recommendations and develop education and training support for Aboriginal tourism businesses: start-up support and ongoing professional development for operators".

Marketing and Product Development

During the Forum, Keynote Speakers Rick Brandt (CEO, Cowichan 2008) and Tewanee Joseph (Executive Director, Four Host First Nations) provided a new perspective on the merging of marketing and product development with traditional culture. During his presentation, Rick Brandt emphasised that, "the underpinnings of the North American Indigenous Games is culture. In many ways we are marketing ourselves. It is our way of life, our songs, our dances,

our art, all offered in a very honest and dignified way". Understanding marketing from a traditional perspective using a modern lens was an approach echoed by Tewanne Joseph. Speaking to the process of branding a product, Tewanne outlined this perspective:

"...our logos...each of them are special and powerful in their own ways. And when you talk about marketing and branding and products, we have to think about our Nations, and we have to think about the power of a brand. Branding is something that's relatively new in terms of terms. But when you think about it, the Aboriginal people and other people from around the world have been branding themselves for centuries.

When you think of the community here, you think of the powwow in Kamloops, you think about hosting major events. When you talk about the Métis, you think of a sash. When you talk about the Coast Salish people, you talk about a longhouse. When you go to Alert Bay, you remember the masks.

That is all branding. That is telling a story. That's your brand promise, because it comes from you, your own people. Your songs, your dance, the way you live your lives. But all we need to do now is bring our traditions and our brand and use the terms of today and bring it into a modern day context.

That is a challenge for us. But that is something we can achieve. "

Following up from the Forum keynote presentations, delegates continued this theme in the breakout sessions, discussing the need for additional business planning resources, mentoring services, and cooperative marketing programs in order to successfully grow new cultural tourism initiatives. Participants identified additional supports, such as: enhancing current community partnerships; encouraging additional dissemination of information; introducing strategies to improve product quality and market readiness; and, developing cooperative packages to reduce marketing costs for small operators.

ABORIGINAL CULTURAL TOURISM: BUILDING STRONG ABORIGINAL ECONOMIES

"Five years ago Premier Campbell initiated the First Citizens' Forum. He wanted to start building a new relationship. A new relationship built on respect and trust, understanding and reconciliation. British Columbia's Aboriginal peoples are huge contributors to the future of tourism in this province. It's time now for innovative ideas; it's time to look closely at what is needed to secure a viable tourism industry for BC's Aboriginal peoples." Honourable Stan Hagen.

The 5th Annual First Citizens' Forum brought forth recommendations that will support the Province and ATBC in working towards growing a vibrant Aboriginal tourism industry in B.C. In addition, the event provided an opportunity for the Province to reach out to key stakeholders to ensure our collective efforts are consistent with the needs and challenges of Aboriginal communities.

The following recommendations are drawn from the Forum dialogue and are recognized by the provincial government as supportive of the Blueprint Strategy objectives to grow a sustainable and thriving Aboriginal cultural tourism industry.

Commitment 1

Strengthening Cultural Ties: The provincial government will work to improve its internal capacity to support Aboriginal cultural revitalization, preservation, and protocol.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will work with Aboriginal cultural community stakeholders to develop a community-based "Working with First Nations" protocol guide.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will work to increase opportunities for communities to strengthen and revitalize their cultures and languages.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation will work to better support Elders as the keepers of cultural knowledge to pass on their wisdom and teachings.

Commitment 2

Improving Education and Training: The provincial government will work to enhance service and product quality, while building capacity through education and training.

Recommendation: MTSA, the Ministry of Advanced Education, and ATBC will work to promote and support the development of Aboriginal focused tourism training programs in British Columbia.

Recommendation: MTSA, the Ministry of Advanced Education and ATBC will work together to increase the number of trained and certified Aboriginal tourism professionals entering the tourism industry.

Commitment 3

Product Development and Capacity Building: The provincial government will work with ATBC, and Tourism BC (TBC), to support the implementation of the *Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Blueprint Strategy*.

Recommendation: MTSA and TBC will participate as a member of the ATBC Blueprint Strategy Implementation Advisory Committee (BIAC).

Recommendation: MTSA and TBC will work with ATBC to coordinate and strengthen Aboriginal tourism marketing efforts and activities within the Province.

Huy ch q'u, Hay chxw q'@, Huy chexw a, T'ooyaksiy' niin, T'ooyaxsut 'nuusm
Gilaakhasla, Kleco, Kukwstsétsemc, Kukwstum'ulhkal'ap, Lim Limpt, Háw'aa, Soga
senla, Nenachadahdlih, Thank you.