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“To me, Indigenous research means the opportunity to use and share traditional knowledge to make a positive impact on the world.”

PROTECTING WHAT REMAINS: THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON INDIGENOUS CULTURES AND COMMUNITIES

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

The research addresses the question: how can a business use traditional knowledge and past experiences to enhance the sustainability of the culture and community they use to offer an Indigenous experience? I conducted this research primarily through interviews, using the conversational method. These interviews, along with my personal experience, provide the traditional knowledge needed to determine five of the top values of Indigenous people, later referred to as the first principles. Four case examples analyzed in secondary literature provide context for understanding issues associated with cultural and community sustainability and Indigenous experience. The first case study investigates cruise tours entering

the territory of Indigenous people in Kimberly (Australia) without their permission (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). The second case study explores media representation of the Sámi people, particularly in Sweden (Zhang & Müller, 2018). The third case study concerns lack of consultation with Indigenous stakeholders in Jasper National Park (Youdelis, 2016). The last study involves the loss of meaning in language among the Haida First Nation (Carr et al., 2016). Drawing on traditional knowledge and values, I propose an approach to transform the negative impacts of these case studies to beneficial outcomes for Indigenous tourism. These benefits include sustainable and ethical tourism, which provides the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural contributions to the community, culture, and land. The second benefit is consultation, which is the process of having one's voice and concerns heard. The last benefit is revitalization, the process of “reviving our ancestral journey” (Kenoras, 2019). My goal in this research is to provide businesses that claim to offer an Indigenous experience with the knowledge to develop sustainable and ethical tourism.

Introduction

I identify as an Indigenous First Nations Canadian from the Nlaka'pamux Nation. I have a longstanding interest in Indigenous tourism and development. With the significant

growth of Indigenous tourism, I feel personally connected to my research since it has the potential to have an impact on my culture, family, and community. Through my research, I hope to provide knowledge to those businesses that offer an Indigenous experience in Canada. The research investigates both Canadian and International case studies on Indigenous tourism and includes interviews with five Indigenous Canadians – three Elders, one Indigenous scholar, and one Indigenous leader – to gain their perspective on Indigenous values and tourism. I also incorporate my personal experience and knowledge as an Indigenous person.

My research explores the impacts of tourism on Indigenous cultures and communities and discusses how traditional knowledge can be used to support future or current businesses. Focusing on Indigenous, or cultural, tourism, I address the question of how businesses might use knowledge of the past to enhance the sustainability of the local culture and community through offering an Indigenous experience. I highlight this issue and provide some answers by analyzing cases where tourism has had a negative impact on Indigenous communities and cultures and by fully explicating traditional community values. The latter I gleaned from interviews with Elders. The knowledge derived from this project will help improve the quality of businesses operating in the Indigenous tourism sector.

The following facts provide a context for the impact of tourism activities on the Indigenous peoples of Canada. Canada recognizes three groups of Indigenous peoples: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. More than 1.67 million people identify as Indigenous in Canada and they comprise more than 630 communities in 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages (Northern Affairs Canada, 2017). Indigenous people are the fastest-growing population in Canada and grew 42.5% between 2006 and 2016 (Northern Affairs Canada, 2017).

A brief history of the repression of Indigenous peoples in Canada provides further context (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Canada's dominant society committed cultural genocide against the Indigenous peoples (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Successive governments created policies that

denied Indigenous peoples the right “to exist as distinct legal, social, cultural, religious, and racial entities” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). For over a century, Canadian policies eliminated Indigenous governments, ignored Indigenous rights, terminated Treaties, established, operated, and forced attendance in residential schools, and asserted control over Indigenous land (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). As a result of these acts, much Indigenous history, knowledge, language, land, and way of life was lost. This history is critical to evaluating current developments and opportunities in Indigenous communities. Much has been taken away from the Indigenous peoples of Canada; consequently, what remains should be fiercely protected.

Butler and Hinch (2007) speak about ignorance and the lack of understanding of differences in dominant colonial societies as one of the main reasons for much of the pain and loss that has been inflicted on Indigenous people. The authors go on to assert that cross-cultural interaction is now integral to building understanding and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. They note that increased positive interaction between the different cultures raises the possibility of creating a better understanding between the two groups and therefore a more just and equitable relationship. Butler and Hinch (2007) argue that tourism can be a facilitator for cross-cultural interaction, allowing cultures to interact in a way which can be planned and managed. Tourism can be an educational tool to increase our understanding of others and the differences between cultures.

Indigenous tourism involves sharing knowledge and culture. It can include a variety of products and cultural attractions such as language, historic sites, monuments, craft workshops, galleries, festivals, and museums (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Indigenous tourism can also include learning about and/or experiencing culture through “local traditions, social customs, religious practices, and cultural celebrations” (Butler & Hinch, 2007, p.42). Indigenous tourism is also referred to as “cultural tourism” that involves the “exchange of information on lifeways, customs, beliefs, values, language, views of environment, and

other cultural resources” (Rothman, 2003, p.169). However, cultural tourism must always include consultation with the local Indigenous people to ensure that the product is appropriate and can be shared.

Indigenous tourism is seen as a form of potential economic growth for communities (Butler & Hinch, 2007). However, it is a tourism business within an underlying capitalist structure that is not necessarily compatible with the preservation of culture and community or with ensuring their sustainability. Sustainability refers to the use of resources to support the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic growth and equity between people without diminishing these resources for future use. Sustainability requires intergenerational equity, and the need to keep resources available to each generation and for new generations to come (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). Fair trade and ethical tourism are platforms that can assist businesses by providing social, cultural, and economic benefits to locals, establishing strong consultation structures, and are ecologically responsible and viable by keeping the environment healthy (Mowforth & Munt, 2009). I believe Indigenous tourism has the potential to be a sustainable and ethical industry.

First Principles

Kovach (2010) speaks about the conversational method, which is what I used to conduct interviews for this research. The author notes that this method is pertinent to Indigenous research and utilizes sharing knowledge through oral teachings and storytelling. The conversational method supports the “Indigenous worldview that honours orality as a means of transmitting knowledge” and “provides a means for sharing remembrances that evoke the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental” connection and wellbeing (Kovach, 2010, p. 42-43). As the author mentions, it required me, as the interviewer, to be a co-participant and active listener and to fully engage with each interviewee. Like Kovach (2010) I also felt that “my own self-knowledge deepened with each conversation” (p.46).

Each of the five interviewees was gracious in sharing their knowledge about their culture, teachings, and experiences. Aaron Sumexhelta is an Indigenous leader from

my home community. Aaron was a Chief for six years and is now a council member for my community. Aaron provided knowledge about Indigenous tourism and the impacts of development from a leadership point of view. Courtney Mason is an Indigenous scholar and researcher; he is an Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair at Thompson Rivers University in the Tourism Management Department. Courtney provided knowledge on tourism impacts. Three Elders shared their knowledge of Indigenous values and tourism: Madeline Lanaro, an Elder from the Nlaka’pamux nation and my home community; Dr. Margaret Vickers Hyslop, an Indigenous Elder at Thompson Rivers University; and Doreen Kenoras, an Indigenous Elder at Thompson Rivers University. All three provided valuable information and taught me that knowledge “is a gift” (Lavallée, 2009, p.35). I am greatly indebted to the Elders for sharing their knowledge with me.

Elders are an essential part of all communities. In Indigenous cultures, Elders hold the knowledge of the culture and community, including “traditional teachings, the ceremonies, and the stories of all our relations” (Lavallée, 2009, p.27). They are the ones who transmit traditional knowledge to the next generations, and without them, cultures would be forgotten and lost (Lavallée, 2009). Elders are also integral advisors in all decision-making processes in a community and should always be consulted with (Lavallée, 2009). In this research, the Elders shared their knowledge of Indigenous values, teachings, and tourism.

Based on these interviews, conversations, research, and personal experience, I have identified five values that are integral to the operation and development of Indigenous tourism experiences. The first of these values is acknowledgement. Acknowledgment is the

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recognition of the community, land, culture, and history of the Indigenous people. It refers to acknowledging the authority of Indigenous people on their land and with their cultures. Businesses should properly acknowledge the land, culture, and people they plan to work with and utilize to provide an Indigenous experience.

The second value is integrity. Integrity is the value of being honest about intentions, promises, and actions with everyone at all times. Strengthening the integrity and unity of partnerships and relationships with all stakeholders is an important step towards developing any business. Businesses should be honest with Indigenous communities and support the integrity of ethical tourism.

The third value is ceremony. Ceremony is the traditional action that Indigenous people perform for certain occasions. Understanding Indigenous ceremony is necessary to learning the culture and beliefs of the people. For any business wishing to offer an Indigenous experience, learning ceremonies is essential to being respectful. It is also necessary to learn if Indigenous people feel it is appropriate to showcase the ceremony, or if it should be kept out of tourism experiences. When hunting, fishing, gathering, or to honor a person, an offering (in my community it is tobacco) is given as a sign of respect to the person or land. This is an example of a ceremonial practice which many businesses may not understand, but it is important if they want to offer an Indigenous experience since it is the traditional way to offer thanks and respect to the land or a person.

The fourth value is listening, which is the skill of giving your full attention to a person who has something to communicate. When a business consults with an Indigenous community, they must listen to the community's thoughts and concerns and hear everyone who has something to say. Acknowledging that everyone has a voice and should be heard is an important step towards consultation. Most importantly, listening to the Elders and hearing their thoughts, knowledge, experience and stories is invaluable.

Lastly, the most significant value that should be incorporated into all other principles is respect. Having and showing genuine respect for the land you are on, the people you meet, and the knowledge you learn is crucial. A

person can show respect by acknowledging the land or by listening to the people. It is important to respect the sacred ceremonies and the wishes of the people. Showing respect by keeping your word and building honest partnerships is an integral part of relationship building.

As described by Lavallée (2009), the medicine wheel is an Indigenous symbol and a tool used to understand phenomena. This symbol, which can be interpreted in many ways and can hold different meanings, is divided into four quadrants that are all interconnected. Each quadrant of the medicine wheel is represented as a colour, usually black, white, yellow, and red (Lavallée, 2009). Typically, the medicine wheel represents health, with the four sections signifying physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being (Lavallée, 2009). Here, I interpret the medicine wheel in a way that represents the five principles: acknowledgement, integrity, ceremony, and listening each represent one quadrant, and respect sits in the middle as the value that connects them all together. The medicine wheel is a powerful symbol and I respectfully acknowledge its importance for representing health and well-being (Lavallée, 2009). However, the values identified can be interpreted as the well-being and sustainability of the culture, land, and people involved in Indigenous tourism.



**Figure 1. Indigenous First Principles
Medicine Wheel Interpretation**

Indigenous Tourism Case Studies:

My four case studies illustrate negative experiences relating to Indigenous tourism. Each case is from a different location, but each shows the ways in which Indigenous

peoples, lands, or cultures have been exploited or ignored. After examining the cases, I analyze the details using the first principles outlined above.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF KIMBERLY, AUSTRALIA

The first case study explores host-visitor interactions between the Indigenous coastal people of Kimberly, Australia, and the cruise tourism industry (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). The issue, according to Scherrer and Doohan (2013), is that “tourists and tour operators access [Indigenous] country without their permission” (p. 160). Tourists enter Indigenous territory and sacred places, which can cause “symbolic cultural representations” damage or physical and spiritual harm (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013, p.162). In addition, Indigenous people have laws and customs that restrict knowledge and meaning of these places to Aboriginal people who are entitled, and senior enough (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). These sacred symbolic cultural sites, “Wanjina images” and “large-scale stone arrangements,” have “inherent power” and “asking permission from the cosmos and from other human beings is a fundamental part of their culture” (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013, p.162). Clearly, Indigenous tourism experiences on the Kimberly coast are impacted by a lack of acknowledgment, respect, and permission. Although the government and tourism operators refuse to listen to their concerns, the Indigenous people recommend acknowledging different views in order to create tolerance and respect (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013).

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF SWEDEN, NORWAY, FINLAND, AND RUSSIA

The second case explores media representations of the Sámi people, the Indigenous people of Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Russia (Zhang & Müller, 2018). According to Zhang and Müller (2018), the Sámi people have been represented in “stereotypical ways,” especially in Swedish newspapers, to present “the northern destination as exotic” in order to sell these places as tourist sites (p. 164). The Sámi have been objectified as part of campaigns to attract tourists. These campaigns have variously depicted the Sámi as “icons,” “as exotic,” and in “tourism products and activities” as objects to add value (Zhang & Müller, 2018, p.173). In short, these campaigns demonstrated a lack of understanding and respect for Sámi culture.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF JASPER, CANADA

In the third case study, Youdelis (2016) argues that in the early twentieth century, Métis families, First Nations, and seasonal inhabitants in Jasper National Park were evicted and forced to move and have since had inadequate consultation concerning development of their land for tourism ventures. Youdelis (2016) maintains that unless “Indigenous representatives speak up” and “request” meetings, they are rarely consulted even if the “development” impacts their “Aboriginal or Treaty rights” (p. 1382). The lack of consultation in Indigenous tourism in the Jasper National Park thus has a negative impact.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF HAIDA GWAI, CANADA

The final case study concerns the Haida First Nation people, Indigenous Canadians from Haida Gwaii, British Columbia (Carr et al., 2016). In acknowledging the centrality of language to sustaining “Indigenous communities and culture” and in helping “Indigenous peoples with their collective identities,” Carr et al. (2016) suggest that “language-based tourism initiatives,” like the developments in Haida Gwaii, can “revitalize community culture” (p. 1072). However, they also warn of the dangers of stripping language of its meaning and using it out of context (Carr et al., 2016). This, Carr et al. (2016) propose, is a particular issue when Indigenous language is appropriated for tourism ventures.

Use of Knowledge:

The Indigenous principles of acknowledgement, integrity, ceremony, listening and respect, and traditional knowledge, as described above, can be used by businesses that want to offer Indigenous experiences to create positive alternatives. While the four case studies provide examples of negative impacts of tourism on Indigenous communities, I propose that the application of Indigenous principles could create a positive alternative that leads to sustainable and ethical tourism grounded in respectful consultation and revitalization.

In Kimberly, Indigenous people are negatively impacted by a lack of acknowledgement and respect when cruise operators and tourists venture onto local land without permission (Scherrer & Doohan, 2013). This case, in fact, conjoins all five traditional values where land,

people, and culture continue to be used without proper acknowledgement. Proper acknowledgement is impossible unless the tour operators meet with the Indigenous groups and listen to their concerns. In meetings, tour operators could improve their integrity through dialogue, and build partnerships with the Indigenous people of the Kimberly coast. By building partnerships, the cruise operators will be able to learn about the local culture, beliefs, and ceremonies behind the sacred sites on which they currently trespass. By incorporating all the values and building relationships, respect is afforded to the business, land, culture, and Indigenous people. Sustainable and ethical tourism and consultation would improve this situation, creating a scenario where the sacred sites are left undisturbed and protected. Through consultation, partnerships could be created to support the growth and development of both the tourism product and the Indigenous community. While the current tourism product is largely limited to visiting sacred sites, a new partnership with Indigenous locals based on consultation and respect could create more sustainable ventures that produce economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.

The main impact of tourism on the Sámi Indigenous peoples has been a lack of understanding and respect for their culture in media representations. Sustainable and ethical tourism could begin to right negative impacts of the past. When the newspapers objectified the Sámi, they did not properly acknowledge the people or culture. In so doing, they lacked integrity and were dishonest in their reporting. The media could create a better situation for the Sámi people; positive reporting would be more ethical and challenge some of the negative stereotypical judgements and exploitations of the past. Respecting the Sámi peoples' identities would have lasting socio-cultural benefits for the sustainability of their community. Reporting on the people in a respectful way would help the community redefine themselves and be more discerning about the type of tourists they receive.

In Jasper National Park, poor consultation, or a lack of consultation, has had an impact on Indigenous tourism. As in Kimberly, consultation could produce sustainable and ethical tourism that has a beneficial outcome

instead of a negative impact on Indigenous peoples. If park officials acknowledged the Indigenous stakeholders as equals and listened to their opinions and concerns, a proper form of consultation could occur. Ethical tourism would allow the Indigenous people of Jasper to exercise their rights and allow their voices to be heard. Currently, the Indigenous stakeholders are not being respected by the park government, but if they were given the chance to be acknowledged and respected, they would have the opportunity to create a more sustainable tourism destination for all.

All five values can have a positive influence on tourism among the Haida First Nations. Acknowledging the centrality of language and understanding its power to support culture means looking at tourism as more than just an economic product. By listening to the Elders about the significance of language, one can fully understand its meaning. Using language in ceremony and cultural activities is important to experiencing these ceremonial practices. Through listening and ceremony, cultural integrity is also respected. It is vital to respect a language and all that it provides for a community, from tourism to cultural empowerment (Carr et al., 2016). Supporting language and its teachings, and developing one's language skills, is a form of cultural and community revitalization. Revitalizing a threatened practice and learning that practice is an avenue to rebuilding cultural identity and strength. As Elder Doreen observes, learning and development is the process of "reviving our ancestral journey" (D. Kenoras, personal communication, Oct. 20, 2019). In other words, we continue to build on the knowledge from our ancestors as we learn.

Conclusion

There are many ways that Indigenous tourism can negatively impact people, including "displacement of community residents, disruption of the social structure, diminished local economic opportunity, and exploitation of local arts and culture as well as environmental damage" (Rothman, 2003, p.167). My research explores how businesses that offer an Indigenous experience could use traditional knowledge to enhance and sustain Indigenous culture and community and thus correct some of the detrimental practices that have been used in the past, and are still

being used in some areas. In this research I have offered traditional knowledge as first principles, interviews using the conversational method, and my personal experience. This research has the potential to provide knowledge to many people that are impacted by businesses offering an Indigenous experience. According to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (2019), “1 in 3 international visitors to Canada are interested in Indigenous tourism experiences.” By 2024, the “total Indigenous Tourism Revenues in Annual Canadian GDP” is expected to increase from “\$800 million to \$2.2 billion” (Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, 2019). Subsequently, the impact of Indigenous tourism in Canada is only going to increase. It is my hope that this research can provide knowledge that businesses can use to offer more sustainable and ethical Indigenous tourism experiences.

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