

**Royal Roads University
School of Tourism and Hospitality**

Empowering potential: indigenous tourism development on vancouver island

Corey Anderson
Royal Roads University, Canada

Abstract: This study explores the tourism development process of seven Indigenous tourism destinations in four distinct regions on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada. Using a snowball sampling technique, in-depth interviews, qualitative questionnaires and observation, data was gathered from three separate groups of tourism stakeholders. The data was evaluated using content analysis, and results provide significant insights into six themes of development that cumulates into guidelines regarding: (1) Legal (2) Workforce (3) Economic Development (4) Governance and Leadership (5) Visitor Engagement and (6) Stakeholder Empowerment. Research concluded that community leaders, destination administrators, destination operators and policy makers throughout Indigenous tourism will benefit from the insights that may assist tourism strategy development. The initial goal of this research is to identify and overcome the key challenges as they relate to important community traits that govern Indigenous destinations as well as illustrate potential opportunities. The information provided by the seven Nations within this research context shares important insights to stakeholders across Canada and the world.

Introduction

This study focuses on the successful methods and examples of Indigenous tourism development on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (BC), Canada. Significant research exists that has investigated Indigenous economic and community development, but less is available that explicitly explores tourism, and less yet which has embedded Indigenous perspectives throughout the research process and outcomes (Shultis & Heffner, 2016; Whitford & Ruhanen, 2016; Carr, Ruhanen & Whitford, 2016). This research works with stakeholders from seven different Nations in four distinct regions on Vancouver Island to provide unique insight into the

Key words: indigenous tourism development, capacity building, economic development, regional success factors, indigenous destination governance, indigenous workforce development

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