

**INDIGENOUS-LED
ECOTOURISM:
A SOURCE FOR POSITIVE
COMMUNITY IMPACT**
A SUMMATIVE REPORT
OF THE INDIGENOUS
ECOTOURISM SUMMIT

Table of Contents

- 3 Executive Summary
 - Scope
 - Why Indigenous-Led Ecotourism?
 - Potential for Action Now
 - Durability in Implementation
 - Responding to Challenges Acute and Profound
- 5 Introduction
 - Program Development at Tides Canada
 - Tides Canada’s Charitable Role
- 7 Process
- 8 Summit Design
 - Goals
 - Approach
- 9 Assumptions
 - Definition and Parameters
- 10 Types of Community Benefits
- 11 Needs and Challenges
 - Long-term Sustenance of Existing Initiatives
 - Successful Launch of New Initiatives
 - Positive Community Impact
- 13 Proposals
- 16 Next Steps
- 17 Appendix A: Best Practices
- 19 Appendix B: List of Summit Participants

Acknowledgements

Tides Canada wishes to acknowledge the contributions of all the participants of the Indigenous Ecotourism Summit and the funders of the Indigenous Ecotourism Opportunities Fund. Thanks are also extended to the staff and leadership of the Kwa’lilas Hotel and the team at Tides Canada for the preparation and execution of a productive and enriching workshop.

Tides Canada is a national charity dedicated to provide uncommon solutions for the common good by helping Canadians secure a healthy environment in ways that promote social equity and economic prosperity. We connect and empower a wide range of people and initiatives across the country to take on tough social and environmental challenges, building a stronger Canada. We work to accelerate positive change and achieve greater impact across the country by bringing giving, investing, and doing under a single roof.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes a ‘convening’ of stakeholders from diverse geographies, sectors, and specialties, all invested in the viability and enduring success of Indigenous-led ecotourism. While the report’s primary function is to encapsulate findings from that gathering, its breadth is designed to inform decision-making by economic development and public sector officers, funders, and community councils. Furthermore, the report is meant to encourage and support deeper discussions among Indigenous communities considering or currently undertaking ecotourism initiatives.

Scope

The report follows the general outline of the Indigenous Ecotourism Summit that took place on November 6 and 7, 2018. This includes: a review of the definition of “Indigenous-led ecotourism”, the spectrum of both positive community impact and the diversity of ecotourism efforts in Canada and around the world, and the challenges to current ecotourism efforts. The report culminates with a host of proposals generated at the Summit to address the needs of both communities and ecotourism enterprises alike.



Participants of the Indigenous-Led Ecotourism Summit. Photo: Jenni Schine.

Why Indigenous-Led Ecotourism?

Indigenous-led ecotourism has the potential to generate lasting and rewarding community impacts. Communities benefit from a homegrown economic engine that employs their youth and supports auxiliary businesses. Indigenous entrepreneurship thrives. Community pride and solidarity strengthen when residents share their culture, language, arts, and heritage with others and one another. Communities connect with their land and water as a result of ecotourism efforts, thereby reinforcing their commitment to stewarding their surroundings. Community leaders benefit from an alternative path for economic development, very different in nature than resource extraction industries. Communities retain youth engaged in ecotourism who might otherwise leave in search of employment. Finally, when Indigenous communities integrate a sustainable relationship with their hereditary land into their daily lives, ecotourism is a source of personal well-being, health, and healing.

Potential for Action Now

Two attractive characteristics of many ecotourism initiatives are feasibility and attainability within Indigenous communities. Efforts can build on existing capacity and infrastructure as well as pursue tested initiatives that have precedent elsewhere. The network of ecotourism operators and communities is one that supports shared learning and cooperation.

Importantly communities do not need to reach an advanced stage of economic development or tourism infrastructure to launch successful ecotourism initiatives. Ecotourism can take a variety of shapes, so communities can initiate and scale up efforts incrementally, in line with their capacity and market demand. Further, communities can pursue discrete efforts or individual components of an eventual comprehensive goal over many years. These efforts can themselves result in positive impact.

The potential for communities to realize economic benefit is strong. Interest in tourism that delivers authentic Indigenous experiences is rapidly increasing, both among Canadian and global tourists. Initiatives help communities benefit from expanding demand for engagement with Indigenous culture.

Durability in Implementation

Interest in Indigenous-led ecotourism is spread across the public, private, and philanthropic sectors. Because initiatives are attractive to support from a variety of sources, they are more likely to be sustainable.

Further, numerous initiatives have been successful elsewhere and demonstrate ecotourism’s capacity to transform communities. Best practices are available to help accurately assess the feasibility of potential initiatives and to expedite positive impact in communities.

Just as achievements in other communities can help new initiatives succeed, undertakings are potentially replicable beyond a single community, making it possible to fully leverage an effort with expenses shared among several communities. Best practices can inform how to identify a tourism opportunity, the potential impact that tourism can have on communities, appropriate business models toward sustainability, and the operations of initiatives.

Responding to Challenges Acute and Profound

The challenges that Indigenous-led ecotourism seeks to address are profound, with wide-ranging impact on the sustainability and well-being of Indigenous communities. Without other opportunities for economic development, communities can be pressed to engage with resource extraction which often has long-term, adverse effects on their land, water and well-being. Indigenous youth who struggle to secure employment in their communities are settling elsewhere. Communities seek additional tools to communicate their rich heritage to future generations.

The term ‘ecotourism’ is being used to describe a host of different experiences, not all of them beneficial or respectful to the environment. This includes trophy hunting and vessel-based whale watching disruptive to sea habitats. Tourism operators who market an Indigenous experience are not necessarily Indigenous-led and, therefore, can hinder the professional development or livelihood of Indigenous people. Moreover, operators may sidestep consultation with communities in developing an Indigenous experience for visitors. As a result, a community’s culture may not be accurately reflected to visitors. Finally, when operators and their employees originate from out of town, the principal economic benefit is lost to local communities.

Indigenous-led ecotourism can be a compelling tool for addressing a host of economic, social, and environmental issues. It has the potential to leverage support across a variety of fields and sectors. Further, with market demand strong and initiatives attainable, Indigenous-led ecotourism can be a source for collaboration, innovation, and broad-based support of thriving Indigenous communities.

Introduction

On November 6 and 7, 2018, a select number of stakeholders convened at Kwa’lilas Hotel in Port Hardy, British Columbia for a joint discussion and co-design process. Participants came from a variety of fields, including economic development, government, philanthropy, impact investing, entrepreneurship, and the tourism sector. Participants shared their understandings of the challenges and potential for Indigenous-led ecotourism. Together, they designed proposals to address barriers to ecotourism operations and ways to promote ecotourism’s positive community impact.



Co-design breakout session. Photo: Jenni Schine.

In 2017, Tides Canada launched a process to identify the needs and potential opportunities for positive community impact through Indigenous-led ecotourism. Tides Canada engaged in a needs analysis from primary sources, seeking direct input from community members, ecotourism operators, economic development officers, funders, government tourism officers, and participating non-profit organizations in the tourism sector. A set of findings then led to further identification of needs as well as proposed initiatives to address them. A summit of stakeholders with interest and expertise in Indigenous-led ecotourism sought to achieve this aim through a ground-up approach to needs and initiative identification.

This report is a summary of that convening. Proposals designed at the summit illustrate for the philanthropic sector the needs of Indigenous communities engaged in ecotourism and the value of ecotourism for positive community benefits like youth empowerment, economic development, cultural revitalization, and environmental stewardship.

Program Development at Tides Canada

Tides Canada’s mission is to help communities secure a healthy environment in ways that promote social equity and economic prosperity. As a national charity, we build bridges among sectors, helping to steer more philanthropy into solutions that address social and environmental challenges. In collaboration with diverse partners, Tides Canada provides tools, expertise, strategy and relationships to get from vision to impact. From Canada’s big cities to its remote land, waters, and rural communities, Tides Canada provides uncommon solutions for the common good.

Tides Canada’s work began in the Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia over 16 years ago. Since then, we have expanded our work across Canada to provide programming across BC’s Pacific Coast, the Canadian North, Ontario, and Manitoba.

Tides Canada prioritizes community need in the development of programs that serve its mission. Programs

are implemented by community members to achieve self-identified goals. Tides Canada Foundation program staff are geographically embedded where impact takes place to support implementation and overall strategy. It is within this context that the Indigenous Ecotourism Summit took shape.

Funding to make this possible came from the Indigenous Ecotourism Opportunities Fund, a donor-supported restricted funding source housed at Tides Canada Foundation. The mandate for the Fund focuses on British Columbia and the Canadian Arctic.

Tides Canada’s Charitable Role

With a mandate to fund charitable programs, Tides Canada Foundation’s role in the summit was to clarify needs and identify opportunities in support of Indigenous-led ecotourism. The summit encouraged the widest breadth of possible initiatives. What resulted was a host of proposals for programs, both charitable and non-charitable in nature. This is an important distinction; Tides Canada is restricted to supporting strictly charitable work. Generally speaking, charitable activities are intended for the public good over the specific interests of any one sector, interest group, or market (find out more about the definition of charitable activities in Canada here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/charities-giving/charities/applying-registration/charitable-purposes-activities/what-charitable.html>). Furthermore, within this category, Tides Canada’s activities are focused by its mission and purpose, as registered with the Canada Revenue Agency. Supporting Indigenous-led ecotourism in pursuit of community benefit falls squarely within the mission of Tides Canada.

Where proposed initiatives fit the criteria of charitable purposes, an examination of feasibility will follow. This analysis can include identification of community-based capacity, funding sources, further understanding of complementary efforts in the sector and individual communities, and identification of metrics to measure progress. Where proposals do not fit the criteria of charitable purposes, communities may find value in conducting such an analysis to inform their planning process and options for financing. Non-charitable entities seeking opportunities to invest in Indigenous-led ecotourism efforts may also wish to engage in this work.

Process

The following process outlines the steps leading up to and following the Indigenous Ecotourism Summit.

DATE	STEP
December 2017	Launch of Indigenous Ecotourism Opportunities Fund
Winter/Spring 2018	Scoping analysis and interviews with tourism stakeholders
Summer/Fall 2018	Planning for Indigenous Ecotourism Summit
November 2018	Indigenous Ecotourism Summit
Fall 2018	Publication of <i>Indigenous-Led Ecotourism: A Source for Positive Community Impact</i>
Fall 2018	Analysis of identified charitable/non-charitable proposals
Fall 2018	Indigenous-led Ecotourism webinar
Winter/Spring 2019	Feasibility and funding strategy development
Spring 2019	Development of pilot project(s)
Spring/Summer 2019	Launch of pilot project(s)
Fall/Winter 2019	Program funding development



Participants review best practices online. Photo: Jenni Schine.

Summit Design

Goals

The goals of the summit were two-fold. With participants arriving from across Canada, the summit was designed to encourage networking and shared learning. Locating the summit at Kwa'lilas Hotel in Port Hardy, British Columbia, on the site of an Indigenous-led ecotourism initiative, further deepened shared understanding of the potential, value, and variety of undertakings in this sector.

Secondly, the summit was intended to strengthen a sector-wide understanding of challenges to sustainable Indigenous-led ecotourism and its potential for positive community impact. Ultimately, the summit culminated in the co-design of proposals to address identified challenges. The summit sought to establish common themes across a spectrum of stakeholders and geographies. As this summit was not intended to be comprehensive and from a representative sample of stakeholders, the results from discussions (and reflected in this report) serve as inspiration for further analysis. Further, findings springing forth from the summit and discussed in this document do not necessarily reflect the feelings of every participant.

Approach

The approach for the summit borrowed from community and participatory planning principles in which participants themselves determine the foundational parameters that then guide them through a program design process. For the summit, foundational parameters included defining the term “Indigenous-led ecotourism”, identifying needs for existing and emerging ecotourism efforts and the potential for community benefit, and clarifying criteria for the necessary elements of any proposal. The session was facilitated by Jessie Hemphill, Principal of Alderhill Planning Inc. Jessie is a skilled community planner whose expertise in this particular subject matter originates from her participation on 'kawatsi Economic Development Corporation and as a member of the Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Nation involved in the creation of the Kwa'lilas Hotel.

Diversity of experience, geography, expertise, and perspectives was sought in the identification of participants invited to the summit. Though discussions invited analysis of broad themes and trends, participants' contributions were, by nature, subjective and informed by particular experiences. By design, the summit sought a diversity of viewpoints and, therefore, a spectrum of approaches towards sustainable Indigenous-led ecotourism.



Facilitator Jessie Hemphill discusses co-design process.
Photo: Jenni Schine.

Assumptions

Definition and Parameters

The term “Indigenous-led ecotourism” refers to an initiative owned and operated by Indigenous people. When operated by a company, Indigenous people make up at least 51% of the board. Beyond this strict definition, models exist in which up-front investment from non-Indigenous people is welcomed, but their participation is explicitly designed to decline over time as an operation secures financial sustainability.

Indigenous-led ecotourism maximizes community benefit as well as educates the public about Indigenous values, culture, and way of life. In that respect, the term may be broadened to incorporate cultural tourism. Initiatives offer Indigenous experiences that have originated through a participatory community engagement process. Communities choose what stories, spaces, activities, and experiences to share with visitors.

An initiative helps secure the conservation and well-being of the local community, land, and water. It follows a stewardship ethic in which tourism seeks to minimize negative impact on its surroundings. With the exception of harvesting, fishing, and hunting that is consumed by the community, Indigenous-led ecotourism is non-consumptive (i.e., restricting recreational fishing and hunting by visitors).

Ecotourism can refer to a variety of experiences. These include: walking or vessel-based tours of a local area; cultural performances such as storytelling, singing, and performances; nature-based activities such as kayaking, canoeing, and snowshoeing; experiencing local foods and culinary culture; helping existing tourism businesses incorporate Indigenous experiences as part of a broader itinerary; encouraging sustainable hunting, fishing, and harvesting; wildlife viewing; and lodge-based overnight stays. Overall, an Indigenous-led ecotourism initiative is experiential, immersive, and transformational for visitors.

Types of Community Benefits

Several types of community impact can result from Indigenous-led ecotourism initiatives. These include:

- Employment and training opportunities for Indigenous community members
- Financial benefits (e.g., share of profits back to the community)
- Infrastructure for community use and enhancement to housing, amenities, and roads of the local area
- Opportunities to build hope, pride, inspiration for youth to remain in their communities
- Cultural revitalization and validation
- Community engagement, participatory planning, and trust-building
- Opportunities for auxiliary entrepreneurship (i.e., “spin-off” businesses)
- Leverage for communities to advocate on behalf of environmental stewardship and protection
- Creation of beautiful spaces
- Public awareness and appreciation of Indigenous culture and heritage



Participants convene during a break. Photo: Jenni Schine.

Needs and Challenges

A number of needs and challenges exist in this sector within the broad categories of long-term sustenance of existing initiatives; successful launch of new initiatives; and fully realized potential for positive community impact.

Long-term Sustenance of Existing Initiatives

Seasonal Employment - Because tourism is oftentimes seasonal, full-time employment is difficult to sustain. Seasonal employment is less attractive for those seeking an annual income.

Employment Standards - Hospitality standards can require a high level of specialized training among employees which can serve as a barrier to entry-level or untrained individuals.

Appeal - A career in tourism is perceived as an unappealing field for some individuals nor is it as lucrative as government employment.

Training - Training and certification to guide visitors in the wild, on water vessels, off-road vehicles, and helicopters are further barriers to entry. Additionally, traditional hospitality training can alienate Indigenous participants who are taught protocols and guidelines that are not aligned with their cultural and community norms.

Seasonal Market – Because visitors descend on a region *en masse* over a relatively short time period, operations face the problems of running out of supply to meet demand and turning away potential visitors, as well as related shortages in staffing and auxiliary business capacity (i.e., ground transportation, restaurants, etc.) Marketing the off-season is a challenge that many operators grapple with.

Coordination - An operator depends on the broader community’s business sector to offer a logistically seamless experience for visitors. This can include airlines, ground transportation, ferry service, restaurants, accommodations, and retail stores. Coordination can be a challenge across this variety of businesses. This effort requires capacity, trust, and mutual goal-setting.

Economic Viability – Market trends and economic modeling are not widely available to operators and communities. Particularly as existing initiatives consider scaling up or diversifying their offerings, knowledge of economic viability could inform priorities, timelines, and strategy.

Access to Capital – Access to patient community-based loans (i.e., finance with typically low or no interest rates and made available over longer periods), support from potential community investors, and connections with non-local investors are unmet needs for existing initiatives seeking growth and expansion.

Designation of “Indigenous Ecotourism” – Indigenous-owned and -operated ecotourism efforts risk losing market share to other operators who advertise an Indigenous experience yet are not Indigenous-run and do not reflect a community-mandated cultural experience. Additionally, operators who advertise to “ecotourists” may not subscribe to standards of environmental stewardship on land and water. As such, those operators who do follow stricter definitions of “Indigenous-led” and “ecotourists” find it difficult to distinguish their uniqueness in the market.

Fixed Costs – Expenses tied to fixed costs can challenge the financial sustainability of an operator. Some fixed costs like insurance, certification for guides, and capital maintenance are necessary for any initiative to survive. Additional expenses include hosting reservation bookings services, logistics coordination, marketing platforms like websites and social media, and staff recruitment and training in the hospitality sector.

Successful Launch of New Initiatives

Relationship with Local Businesses – Tourism initiatives are, by nature, based within a particular geography. Depending on existing supply, an emerging business risks cannibalizing existing operations and cutting into the existing market share of visitors. A healthy economy depends on a diversity of businesses that complement one another rather than a duplication of a single type of business.

Mutual Industry-Community Understanding – Indigenous community-based operations have the capacity to tap into global visitors through the broader tourism industry. Travel and tourism agencies are sometimes not aware of the cultural norms that would expedite a partnership with Indigenous communities. This can include the preferred method of communication with communities, the desire for a dedicated point of contact from the community, and the community’s comfort level with short- or limited-stay interactions with visitors. This gap of understanding can be a barrier for an emerging initiative to market itself to a wider group of visitors.

Market Knowledge – Understanding the potential types of visitors, their behaviours, preferences, and financial capacity can help emerging operators and community initiatives effectively design their tourism offerings and prioritize their resources.

Positive Community Impact

Capacity – Particularly because seasonal work concentrates effort into a limited time frame, management capacity at the community level is a challenge. Operators and, by extension, communities face a risk of burning out their leaders. Further, succession planning for leaders and a supportive network among leaders in this sector are important considerations for sustaining businesses and offering economic development to the community.

Community Input – Reflecting the voice of the community back to visitors is essential to Indigenous-led ecotourism. The process to identify and reach agreement on that voice can be time- and resource-consuming. Additionally, the skill to facilitate this process may require specialized training.

Community Support of Tourism – Communities’ gaps in understanding the scope of a tourism undertaking may hinder their support of an initiative. This includes their perception of tourism’s effect on economic development, cultural revitalization, youth engagement, and its capacity to serve as a source of pride for the community.

Intergenerational Transfer of Knowledge – Indigenous-led ecotourism efforts depend on the leadership of a community’s youth not only to operate initiatives but also serve as their nations’ ambassadors. As ambassadors, next-generation leaders require knowledge of their culture as well as the sensitivity to distinguish which stories, rituals, and spaces are appropriate to share with visitors. To do so in a culturally-authentic way, leaders within the tourism sector benefit from their elders’ transfer of knowledge. This interaction requires trust, time, commitment, and the capacity to record this information for others in the future.

Tourism Planning Expertise – Communities that are interested in investing in a tourism effort need the specific expertise to understand the fundamentals behind an initiative in this sector. This knowledge includes the risks, best practices, operating needs and budget, training, and economic impact of a tourism initiative. As this is a specific body of knowledge, lack of tourism planning expertise can impede community investment.

Proposals

The following set of proposals were designed by participants at the Indigenous Ecotourism Summit. They fall within the definition of “Indigenous-led ecotourism” and address the needs identified by the group. Proposals do not necessarily reflect the opinions of every participant. All proposals require further analysis to establish feasibility. Asterisks indicate proposals that would likely require support outside of the charitable sector.

Accreditation for Indigenous-led Ecotourism*

Description: Unique designation for Indigenous-led ecotourism operators who meet a set of defined guidelines and standards.
Result: Operators gain market share for their unique offering of a culturally-specific approach to ecotourism.
Impact: Higher likelihood of financial sustainability for Indigenous-led ecotourism efforts.

Best Practice Missions

Description: On-site expeditions to relevant ecotourism initiatives.
Result: Experiential learning and knowledge-sharing.
Impact: Strengthening of ecotourism sector.
(Access to charitable funding dependent on non-profit status of ecotourism initiative.)

Community Benefits of Ecotourism

Description: Analysis of the short- and long-term benefits of ecotourism for Indigenous communities.
Result: Strengthened case for participation by communities. Attraction of funding support.
Impact: Increased economic development and cultural revitalization in Indigenous communities.

Comprehensive Community Plan for Ecotourism

Description: Community-wide process to identify needs related to launching and sustaining an ecotourism effort.
Result: A community-backed tourism planning and development effort that accurately reflects the desires and cultural voice of residents.
Impact: Cultural revitalization, community cohesiveness, capacity-building, and broader involvement in civic affairs among community members.

Culturally-Adapted Training

Description: Specialised training program and ongoing year-round support focused on Indigenous professionals in hospitality.
Result: A program that considers the cultural needs of Indigenous professionals and underscores the value of tourism as an attractive career and a way to honour heritage.
Impact: Greater youth retention inside Indigenous communities. Youth employment. Broad-scale economic development for households and communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism operations.

Ecotourism Toolkit for Communities

Description: Templates, community planning guidelines, checklists for feasibility and market-readiness, timelines, and sample policies helpful in launching ecotourism initiatives.

* Initiative would need to be funded outside of the charitable sector.

Result: Responsibly-led process with the benefit of best practices tested for effectiveness and positive impact.

Impact: Economic development for Indigenous communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts. Community capacity-building. Strengthening the sector.

Global Access to Investors*

Description: Forum for emerging and expanding Indigenous-led ecotourism operations.

Result: Operators showcase their businesses as potential investments for domestic and international funders.

Impact: Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts. Economic development for Indigenous communities.

Hotel Tax Allocation*

Description: Working group to address issues with British Columbia’s hotel tax allocation.

Result: Indigenous communities more fully benefit from the potential of the hotel tax allocation.

Impact: Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts. Economic development for Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Ecotourism Emerging Leaders Network

Description: Network of Indigenous tourism professionals in distinct levels of development.

Result: Participants gain training, learn from global best practices, advance skills, increase motivation to pursue a career in hospitality, and progress in their career development.

Impact: Youth empowerment. Community retention of youth. Community capacity-building.

Indigenous Ecotourism Marketing*

Description: Coordinated marketing campaign for domestic and international tourism.

Result: Greater awareness of the value of Indigenous-led ecotourism.

Impact: Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts. Economic development for Indigenous communities.

Institute for Community-based Ecotourism Planning

Description: Community planners trained in Indigenous-led ecotourism planning processes offer facilitation, templates, training, project management, and best practices to communities.

Result: Greater participation from community in civic affairs. Tourism planning that accurately reflects community’s goals.

Impact: Community capacity-building. Cultural revitalization and empowerment. Economic development of communities.

Mentoring Program

Description: Emerging and existing ecotourism operators and professionals are paired with seasoned experts.

Result: Mentors offer advice, guidance, job shadowing, career development opportunities, and networking assistance.

Impact: Community capacity-building. Youth employment and empowerment. Economic development of communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts.

Oral History Elder-Youth Knowledge Transfer

Description: Stories, language, rituals, and cultural knowledge are transferred to youth by elders and, where appropriate, recorded as a foundation for Indigenous-led ecotourism efforts.

Result: Accurate integration of culture into ecotourism efforts and strengthening of community-wide cultural heritage.

Impact: Cultural revitalization and preservation. Youth empowerment. Strengthened community resilience.

Patient Capital Community-Based Loans*

Description: Focused financing tools to help communities fund capital projects.

Result: Increased capacity for Indigenous-led capital projects to launch and become financial sustainable.

Impact: Economic development of communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts.

Shared Services for Indigenous-led Ecotourism*

Description: Administrative hub serving ecotourism operations offering a suite of services such as insurance, recruiting and training, marketing, bookkeeping, and communications.

Result: Lower fixed cost expenses as a result of benefits at discounted prices based on economies of scale.

Impact: Economic development of communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts.

Site-Specific Market Analysis*

Description: Demonstration of the potential economic impact of tourism and strategies for how best to reach potential visitors.

Result: Informed decision-making for communities considering launching an initiative or maturing existing initiatives.

Impact: Community capacity-building. Economic development for communities.

Start-Up Grants for Emerging Initiatives

Description: Small-scale grants provided to emerging initiatives focused on Indigenous-led ecotourism.

Result: Support of initial steps critical to sustainable operations.

Impact: Community capacity-building. Economic development of communities. Financial sustainability of ecotourism efforts.

(Access to charitable funding dependent on non-profit status of ecotourism initiative.)

Training Communities to Self-Facilitate Ecotourism Planning Process

Description: Training sessions for community representatives on facilitating and implementing a community planning process focused on ecotourism.

Result: Responsible decision-making on resource allocation. Greater participation among community members in civic affairs.

Impact: Community capacity-building. Economic development for communities.

** Initiative would need to be funded outside of the charitable sector.*

** Initiative would need to be funded outside of the charitable sector.*

Next Steps

Sharing the present report with participants fulfills a promise to reflect back findings from the summit. Additionally, distribution of this summary can be valuable to a broader audience with interest in planning, resource allocation, and the additional context of Indigenous-led ecotourism.

As its host, Tides Canada will be considering the feasibility of proposals that fall within its organizational mandate, charitable guidelines, priorities, and funding partnerships. Tides Canada is also eager to share this learning with other members of the philanthropic sector and engage in further conversations to address needs in this area.

The network that was created when diverse participants gathered on behalf of strengthening Indigenous-led ecotourism efforts has the potential to expand, grow, and continue. Participants and engaged readers of this summary are encouraged to support shared learning, best practices, challenges, and opportunities.

For Further Information

Contact Orit Sarfaty, Director of Strategic Programs, Tides Canada orit.sarfaty@tidescanada.org.



Co-design breakout session. Photo: Jenni Schine.

Appendix A: Best Practices

Summit participants discussed a host of existing initiatives within Indigenous-led ecotourism and what distinguished them as best practices. The following initiatives have not been independently vetted. This participant-sourced collection is intended to inspire further research and inquiry.

Best practices discussed had common themes across geography, scale, and context. These include integrating community needs into the budget, design, programming, and implementation of capital projects; prioritizing local economic opportunities including employment and “spin-off” businesses; and seeking guidance through a community consultation process to accurately portray a community in its own voice.

Kenojuak Cultural Centre and Print Shop, Cape Dorset, Nunavut

The Cultural Centre and Print Shop opened in the fall of 2018. It includes a community hub and gathering space, exhibition and lecture space, fully operational print shop, specialized art-making equipment and art studios, and a retail space. The Centre balances tourist demands for world-class art exhibitions and galleries with year-round resident needs, including the community of artists congregating in Cape Dorset. The Centre includes a print shop, a space for elders to conduct training and knowledge transfer, as well as a beautiful facility showcasing artworks to visiting tourists. <http://kenojuakcentre.ca>

Kwa’lilas Hotel, Port Hardy, British Columbia

The hotel features 85 rooms, meeting spaces, a restaurant and pub, a retail space, and a display of local artworks throughout the facility. The building makes extensive use of local cedar, with the design intended to resemble the traditional big house style central to Indigenous communities. The hotel was the result of a multi-year comprehensive community consultation process. Cultural heritage is integrated throughout the facility from bilingual menus at the restaurant to the display of local art. The facilities include spaces for gatherings and celebrations as well as meeting rooms for business affairs. The hotel employs local community members with culturally-sensitive employment practices. Kwa’lilas Hotel demonstrates the cultural revitalization that the community desired and serves as a source of community pride. <https://kwalilashotel.ca>

Lennox Island, Prince Edward Island

Lennox Island is located on the northwest coast of Prince Edward Island and occupied by the Mi’kmaq Nation, a community totalling approximately 400 residents. The Lennox Island Mi’kmaq Cultural Centre offers exhibitions explaining the history, language, and culture of the Mi’kmaq Nation. Tourism at Lennox Island includes the Path of Our Forefathers, a stacked-loop nature trail that leads hikers through the Nation’s history-rich forests and along the scenic shores of Lennox Island. The approach behind Lennox Island was incremental and participatory in which elders were approached for their cultural knowledge, serving as the basis for the creation of a cultural centre. Partially the result of this ground-up approach, the centre includes elements valued by the community. These include an art workshop and locally-sourced food available for purchase. <http://lennoxisland.com/>

Lirrwi Tourism, Yirrkala, Australia

Lirrwi Tourism is an Aboriginal-owned tourism business located in North East Arnhem Land, Australia. Lirrwi Tourism works with the local Yolŋu people to together offer an authentic experience to visitors. The area supports a cultural centre which includes a museum as well as a gallery with art offered for sale, a stage, workshop room, and elders’ room. Residents generate tourism revenue despite minimal capital investment. Visitors experience the area in small groups where they are hosted for 3-4 days. The experience is purposely unstructured with minimal programming to allow visitors to experience the land authentically. A limit is

placed on the number of visitors welcomed to the area in an effort to reduce the adverse effects of tourism on the land. <https://www.lirrwitourism.com.au>

Sam S Cultural Tours, Cape Town, South Africa

This company is operated locally in central Cape Town. It functions as a connector between visitors and local attractions and offerings. This is an example of an initiative providing community economic development without a costly capital budget. The company has succeeded in offering training to youth in hospitality and entrepreneurship. Local households earn income by offering home-cooked meals to visitors. <https://www.facebook.com/www.samsculturtours.co.za>

Sea Wolf Adventures, Port McNeill, British Columbia

This expedition company offers guided grizzly bear viewing and cultural tours exploring the local history and language of the kwakwaka’wakw with local First Nation guides. Sea Wolf Adventures is Indigenous-owned and –operated and has succeeded in building trust with local communities through long-term and committed engagement. The company provides jobs in remote communities as well as other business development and entrepreneurship in the area. In addition, Sea Wolf Adventures has implemented on-the-land programs for Indigenous youth. <https://seawolfadventures.ca>

Spirit Bear Lodge, Klemtu, British Columbia

Spirit Bear Lodge is owned and operated by Kitasoo/Xai’xais (KX) Nation. The Lodge includes bear-viewing tours and the opportunity to stay overnight in an Indigenous-owned and –operated establishment. The Lodge offers individual accommodations and a “Great Room” for central gathering. The Kitasoo Xai’xais (KX) Nation led an effort to protect spirit bear habitats through the “Kitasoo Spirit Bear Conservancy” in the Canoona River and the area of south Princess Royal Island. KX developed protected areas (PAs) in their territories that were harmonized with protected areas created by neighbouring First Nations to create a monumental network of PAs now called the Great Bear Rainforest. The community controls and manages Spirit Bear Lodge. Additionally, spatial and temporal planning (including protected areas) is community-mandated and implemented. The Lodge completes protocol agreements with other operators in the territories and supports guardian watchman programs. Additionally, the Lodge is a source of employment for the immediate community, especially youth. The Lodge has leveraged its contribution to tourism revenue on behalf of the local and provincial economies to voice concerns regarding policies related to trophy hunting and similar types of extractive tourism. Finally, the Lodge’s proximity to the village in Klemtu has positive effects on the infrastructure of the reserve itself. <https://www.spiritbear.com>

Wendake, Quebec City, Quebec

Wendake is a self-governing territory of the Huron-Wendat Nation in the midst of Quebec City. Tourist attractions include Old Wendake featuring an historic 18th century church, the Onhoüa Chetek8e Traditional Huron Site, a reconstruction of an historic Huron Village. Tsawenhohi House, an historic building in Old Wendake, features guided tours, craft demonstrations, an exhibition of cultural objects, a display of archaeological artifacts from the site, and a multimedia presentation. The reserve includes a hotel and food services as well as a museum. In addition, the area supports a local festival that attracts both visitors and residents. The result is the creation of 300 local jobs. The area’s infrastructure has expanded through the creation of an anchor tenant and auxiliary “spin-off” businesses (currently, 11 spin-off businesses are in operation). <http://tourismewendake.ca>

Appendix B: List of Summit Participants

NAME	ORGANIZATION	ROLE	LOCATION
Elissa Beckett	Tides Canada	Vice President, Development and Strategic Initiatives	Toronto, ON
Conrad Browne	k'awat'si Economic Development Corporation LP (KEDC)	CEO	Port Hardy, BC
Kelly Galaski	Planeterra Foundation	Director of Global Programs	Toronto, ON
Larry Greba	Kitasoo Band	Managing Director	Klemtu, BC
Brodie Guy	Coast Funds	Executive Director	Courtenay, BC
Jessie Hemphill	Alderhill Consulting Inc.	Facilitator	Port Hardy, BC
Keith Henry	Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC)	President and CEO	Vancouver, BC
Christian Hensen	Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC)	Revenue and Compliance Analyst	Vancouver, BC
Kylik Kisoun Taylor	Tundra North Tours	Founder	Inuvik, NWT
Bruce Lawson	The Counselling Foundation of Canada	President and CEO	Toronto, ON
Pacome Lloyd	Department of Implementation, Nunavut Tunngavik	Assistant Director	Iqaluit, NU
Dave Lough	Consultant, Former Deputy Minister of Nunatsiavut Government	Community and Economic Development	St John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador
K’odi Nelson	Nawalakw Wellness Society	Executive Director	Alert Bay, BC
Mike Robbins	Founder	The Tourism Company	Toronto, ON
Hedy Rubin	Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia (REFBC)	Grants Program Manager	Vancouver, BC
Orit Sarfaty	Tides Canada	Director, Strategic Programs	Toronto, ON
Jenni Schine	Tides Canada	Pacific Programs Community Liaison	Victoria, BC
Roger Sterritt	Gitanmaax Band	Councilor	Hazelton, BC
Casey Vanden Heuvel	CVH Consulting	Founder	Squamish, BC

VANCOUVER

400-163 W Hastings St.
Vancouver BC V6B 1H5
604.647.6611

TORONTO

360-215 Spadina Ave.
Toronto, ON M5T 2C7
416.481.8652

YELLOWKNIFE

300-4902 49 St.
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2P2
867.988.1963

TOLL FREE 1.866.843.3722

WEBSITE tidescanada.org

EMAIL info@tidescanada.org

f **t** **@** [@TidesCanada](https://www.instagram.com/TidesCanada)

