



ABORIGINAL TOURISM MARKETING CIRCLE

Tuesday, April 2nd, 2013
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM
Spirit Ridge, Osoyoos, BC

MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order – Keith Henry, Chair 9:00 AM
2. ATMC Member Introductions and Updates 9:10 AM
 - Brief Introductions took place by all attendees.
 - Keith – Provided brief background on ATMC, ATMC MOU with some highlights on the state of the industry.

Member Updates

- **Jeff Provost - EAST Inc.**

A key focus on remote, fly-in, First Nations communities and businesses with a focus on small groups (6-8) and not mass tourism. A major focus on creating and maintaining sustainable tourism businesses.

New projects – **Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project**, Manitoba's only world heritage project with a focus on one of the only untouched boreal forests and the people that live there. Heritage Park is the same size as the country of Denmark! New product will include winter product tied to this project and other business development.

Regional fishing derby with consistent events that ensure the operators/communities meet industry standards.



Wetlands Project that involved the FN communities and people in trail systems and boardwalks that help protect the wetlands and utilize the FNs to educate visitors on the ecosystems and culture.

Challenge – No provincial strategy for Manitoba tourism or Aboriginal tourism. Aboriginal tourism is not necessarily on the radar provincially or federally.

- **Kevin Eshkawkogan – Great Spirit Circle Trail/Aboriginal Tourism Ontario**

Provided an update and brief history on GSCT and its origins, products, and general strategy that focuses on Cultural Authenticity, Marketing & Branding, Product Development, and Human Resources Development. Also briefly discussed the Aboriginal Tourism Ontario Strategy and offered it up for anyone interested in getting a copy.

Stressed the importance of addressing and engaging the natural resources industry to ensure that travel services are included and developed as opportunities to Aboriginals.

Discussed briefly the need for assistance with the involvement in the cruise industry and that GSCT is exploring purchasing a cruise ship dedicated to the great lakes seasonally and in other international ports for the balance of the year.

Discussed the importance of partnerships and working not only collectively but also with the various regional, provincial and national entities to help the Aboriginal tourism industry grow through marketing the market ready, culturally appropriate Aboriginal business to local, domestic and international markets. For those who are not ready, a mentoring/support program needs to be developed to get them ready.

Identified that in 2012, a investment of approximately \$500,000 by government translated into a regional economic impact to the Ontario amounting to close to \$10M – a return of 20 to 1.



- **Brenda Dragon - NWT**

Aboriginal Advisory Council to NWT Government is helping grow the industry and move the industry in a good direction. There are 45 licenced tourism businesses that identify themselves as Aboriginal.

Implementation of NWT Aboriginal Tourism 5 yr. strategic action plan is key over the short terms with a focus on youth/elders and preserving the culture and traditional ways. Training dollars are abundant but people aren't utilizing the services and training. Infrastructure is limited (i.e. hotels, roads, food services, etc.). Focus on culture authenticity, human resource development, and product development.

Tourism Product Diversification and Marketing Program delivered by NWT. (Brenda and Ron to provide a contact that may be able to share if this program is working for those wanting to share this with their governments.)

- **Robin McGinley - COTA**

Various small communities with a unique situation where COTA is recognized in the treaties and the establishment the Regional Tourism Association in Quebec for Eeyou Istchee that provides them with a stable funding every year.

Development initiatives tackling the 'lack of marketing knowledge', 'lack of formal structure', 'lack of human resources', 'difficulty finding funding', 'showcase product development', and 'lack of communication'.

- **Ron Ostrom - NWT**

Good news – Budget increase to NWT tourism budget. Industry is beginning to rebound with an increase in tourism receipts in 2012 and 2013 is looking quite good. Focusing on Japan and Chinese markets to grow the industry and provide support to operators to cater to these markets.

Face some of the same issues regarding delivery (i.e. consistency, no-show guides, etc.) as is faced in Aboriginal tourism. Positioning themselves well by leveraging external successes such as 'Ice Road Truckers', 'Ice Pilots – NWT', and 'Arctic Air'.



- **Dave Lavreau - Quebec Aboriginal Tourism**

Authenticity, partnerships, accomplishments.

Represents approximately 154 Aboriginal tourism businesses and over 3000 jobs. QAT is one of 18 sectoral organizations recognized in the Quebec tourism industry.

Involved in marketing, developing partnerships through product development, and building business capacity.

Quebec government has been very supportive financially and are serious about developing the Aboriginal tourism Industry and meet with them frequently.

- **Kevin Kelly - Nunavut Tourism**

Biggest issue appears to be with business capacity (literacy, numeracy) and the ability of potential business operators to operate the their business. Have changed the approach from telling the people what they need to do to asking them what they want to do in tourism. Approximately 50 or so Inuit business operators access marketing support from Nunavut Tourism. New land claims agreement affects everyone dramatically.

- **Blake Rogers - TIA Yukon**

Provides and unified voice for the tourism industry in the Yukon and is the 'umbrella organization' for the industry. Have developed strong partnerships with other territories and Alaska. 25% of the Yukon is made up of Aboriginal people, 14 First Nations (11 are self governing), and a number of First Nation development corporations that focus on various developments, including having Dawson recognized as a UNESCO heritage site. A large number of Americans travel through the Yukon while on their way to Alaska and 25% of visitors originate from Frankfurt, Germany, due to a direct flight from Frankfurt.

Aboriginal tourism is relatively new to the Yukon tourism product offerings. There are two new cultural centres in Whitehorse and Haines Junction.



- **Don Wilson - Travel Alberta**

They started with about 20 Aboriginal tourism products/businesses increasing to over 100 leading up to the Olympics with this number dropping since. There is a challenge of bringing this product to market as there needs to be some enhancements that need to take place not only with Aboriginal tourism businesses but all tourism businesses.

- **Mary Louise Bernard – Wagmatcook First Nation**

Have been working diligently to develop the industry by educating the FNs and government in Nova Scotia. Would like to develop partnerships with other Aboriginal groups involved in Aboriginal tourism. Would like to have a mentorship program to help them develop their product and the industry.

- **Patricia Dunnett/April Richardson - Metepenagiag Mi'Kmaq Nation**

Operates the Metepenagiag Heritage Park, a state of the art cultural tourism institution that features over 3000 year of archaeological findings. The centre has a number of challenges to address low visitor numbers to the park. There is no 'provincial' voice and being a seasonal business, it is hard to prepare and get ready for seasonal marketing.

- **Barry Parker – AANDC**

Build your vehicle after you know where you want to go and tell that story that Aboriginal tourism business is and can be big business and does have positive economic impacts. Government has a lot of reports that it needs to share. Product needs to be developed in gateway cities to build up demand. Attention needs to be paid to the 'buffalo industries' (industries that once you kill off, you need another focus) like natural resource based businesses (i.e. mining) and a strategic plan to deliver travel services to these industries that have a living legacy once the mining is done.

Referenced the Aboriginal Cultural Experiences – National Guidelines and the work that could follow as it could set the standards for all businesses and how



mainstream gets into business with Aboriginal tourism businesses. AANDC may be interested in supporting the exploration of the cruise industry and the development of travel services for the natural resources industry.

Federal tourism advisory committee needs engagement and involvement of Aboriginal tourism in this process.

- **Paula Amos/Keith Henry– AtBC**

AtBC is maturing and although still focuses on marketing and educating Aboriginal businesses, it has become much more evolved. The organization is stable and growing and business growth provincially has had a very positive economic impact to the local regions as well as to the province and the country.

We need to be very strategic in communicating with the government agencies. The return on the investment into AtBC is 16:1.

Access to capital is a major issue where policy needs to be addressed.

- **Linda Sarazin/Trina Simard – Aboriginal Experiences**

Operates Aboriginal Experiences catering to the mostly group tours and European visitors visiting Ottawa. ATASO is informally dissolved.

Aboriginal Cultural Ambassadors Training Program is working well and improving each year with 22 Ambassadors trained to date that have been placed in various Aboriginal tourism businesses across the country.

Have been working on the Aboriginal Summer Solstice 3-day event with approximately 30,000 people participating in this popular Ottawa event.



- **Lori Beaver**

Has previously set up and managed Alberta's first RATA from 1998-2003; it closed due to lack of funding. Lori coordinated the Treaty 7 Tourism office from 2007-2010, which again closed due to funding. The continual lack of long term funding and interruptions in service has been detrimental to tourism in Alberta. Identified with the list of items Robin described, eg lack of communication, understanding of the industry, etc. are still very apparent areas that need attention within the industry across the country.

National Association of Friendship Centers

DEFERRED

- a. Labour Market Research/Partnership

3. On-line Toolkit and National Manual on Market Readiness and Authenticity – Trina/Linda

4. Discussion on future of ATMC – goals, objectives, Membership, etc.

COMMON THEMES:

- Lack of provincial and national strategies.
- Focus on Marketing & Branding, Product Development, Human Resource Development, and Cultural Authenticity.
- Partnerships are key and need to be developed and nurtured.
- Could a business licencing/certification program work?
- Perhaps ATMC 'transforms' into something along the lines of the 'Aboriginal Champions Advisory Council' as identified in the NWT document from October 2010, titled 'Building the Aboriginal Tourism Product'.
- 'Don't reinvent the wheel' – Sharing of information between Aboriginal businesses/ATMC members is critical and key to everyone's success. Perhaps a simple industry accessible website where Aboriginal businesses can access and share documents could be created. In the federal tourism strategy, there is a commitment to develop an online tool database.



- Cruise ship management plan.
- Council Tourism Members – “ATMC” Federal tourism advisory committee by Aboriginal tourism members.
- There needs to be a strategic approach to the development of travel services when government allows for the development of natural resources (i.e. Ring of Fire development).
- Updated research is very much needed.
- Inconsistent funding/Lack of sustainable funding on the provincial and national levels.
- The Aboriginal tourism industry (economic) ‘story’ needs to be told with the economic data to support the ‘story’. Story needs to be kept on the business side of things with collection of economic data on the provincial and national data.

Next Steps:

- Build on our successes by finding our next ‘project’.
 - Continue to connect to share information to discuss these common themes.
 - Garner support to help us tell the economic ‘story’. NAEDB and Chairperson, Clarence Louie should be approached as well as any data we currently have should be shared.
 - Engage the NAEDB to discuss the work of the ATMC.
 - National Manual needs to be tested in the field with BC, ON, and Quebec being used as test areas to start.
 - Coordinate and conduct a research study on the cruise ship industry.
 - Coordinate and conduct a research study/strategy on the development of travel services that assist in developing natural resource projects.
 - Coordinate the development and evolution of ATMC to broaden the scope to include product development, human resource development, cultural authenticity, and marketing & branding.
5. MOTION 2013-01 – THAT WE CONTINUE TO HAVE KEITH HENRY, CEO, ATBC, BE APPOINTED THE CHAIRPERSON OF ATMC.



MOVED: BRENDA DRAGON

SECONDED: JEFF PROVOST

ALL IN FAVOUR.

ADJOURNMENT

5:00 PM