Aboriginal Tourism Demand In Northern BC

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Presentation overview

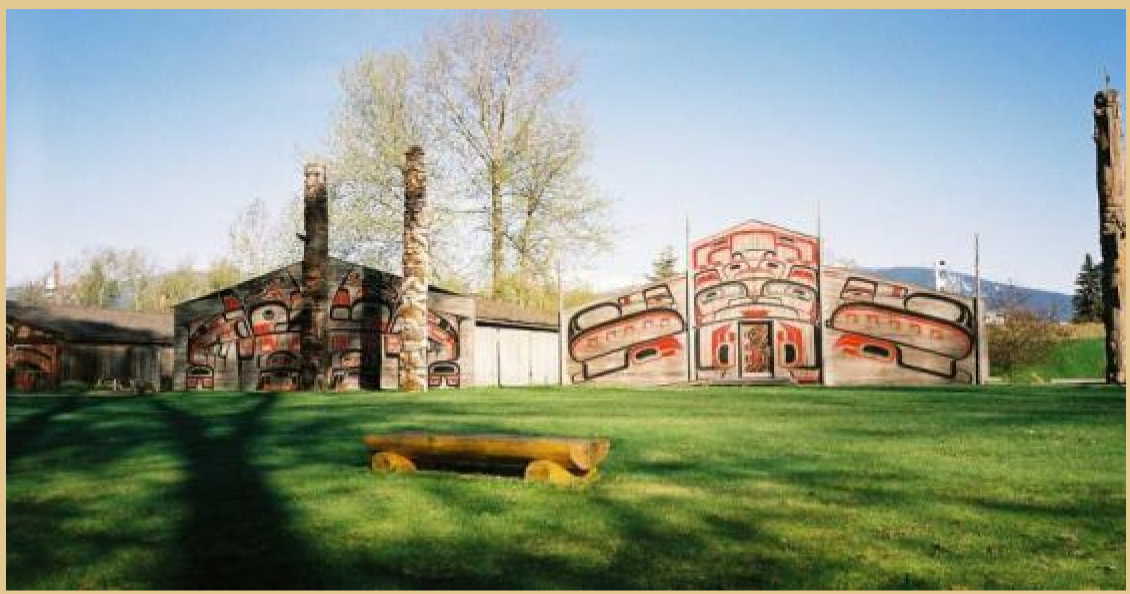
- AT demand in Canada
- A focus on BC and the North
- Potential markets
- Implications

Canada

- Tourism in Canada is a $55 billion/yr industry.
- Canadians account for majority (70%) of total tourism revenues.
- The 2010 Olympics presented a unique opp. to Canada’s First Nations in allowing the world a glimpse on their unique cultures.

AT Demand in Canada

- The Canadian Tourism Commission and Aboriginal Tourism Canada document a **growing demand** and **interest** by tourist markets **for Aboriginal cultural tourism**



Key Market findings

- According to Aboriginal Tourism Canada (ATC), the most promising opportunities for Aboriginal tourism development are tied to travelers in North America, select locations in Europe, and some countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Key AT Markets for Canada – Europe

- The potential offered by the **European market** regarding Aboriginal tourism has been found to be one of the strongest for Aboriginal cultural tourism products
- The **U.K., Germany, Switzerland** and **France** are some of the highest potential markets

What's missing? A # 1 barrier!

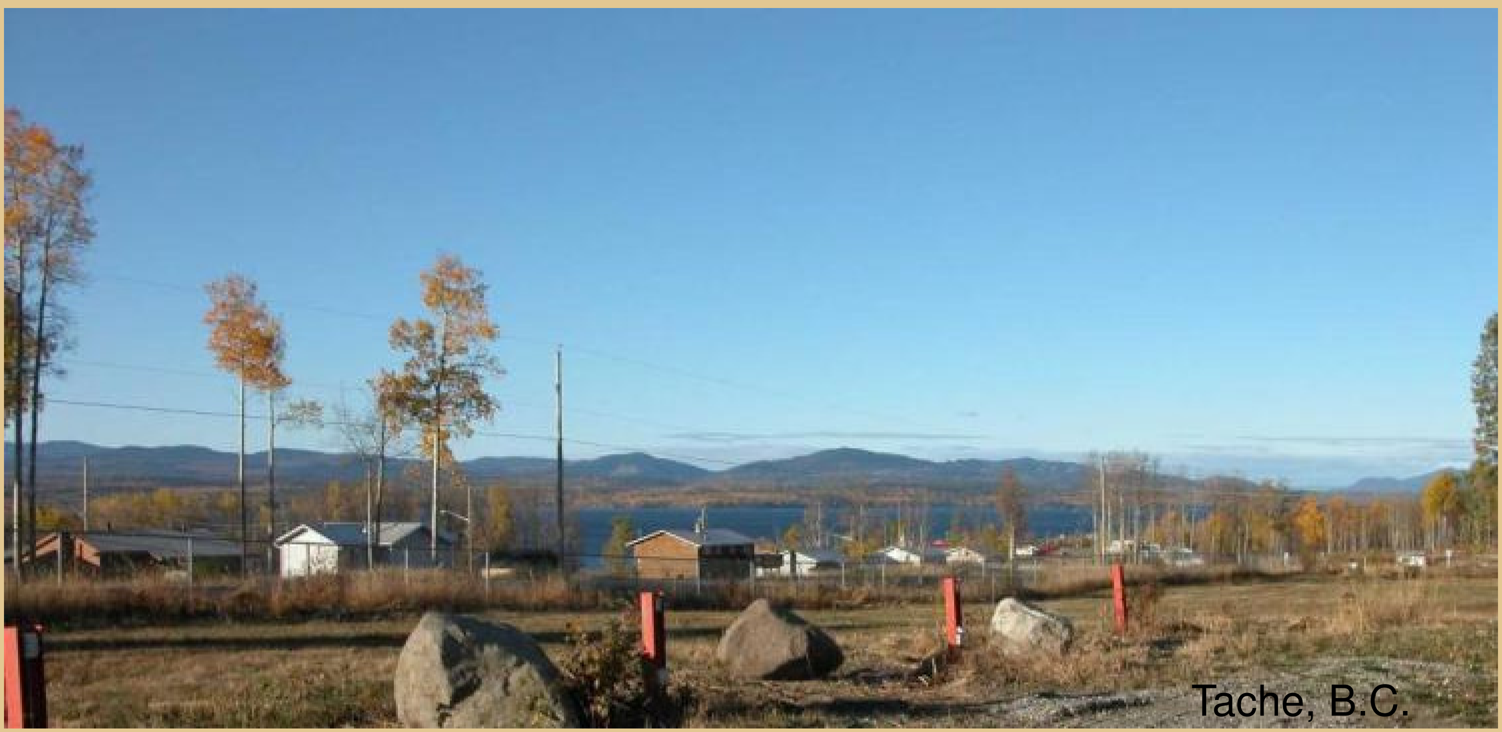
- Information about the types of experiences/activities/topics visitors are interested in as well as the way in which these experiences can occur!
- Research gap
  - Lack of understanding of traveler preferences regarding Aboriginal tourism products

Context: How Does this Information Apply to Northern B.C.?

- Need for economic diversification in the north
- Economic, social, cultural, environmental and other development benefits for First Nation communities.
- There is a potential market ~ visitors who are particularly attracted to the outdoors are more likely to travel to Canada's northern parts.
- In 1999, 1.1 million outdoor visitors were considered "high yield" travelers –preferably stay in roofed accommodation.

Key Objectives of Research

- To identify tourists' preferred Aboriginal tourism products and product features
- To identify potential target markets

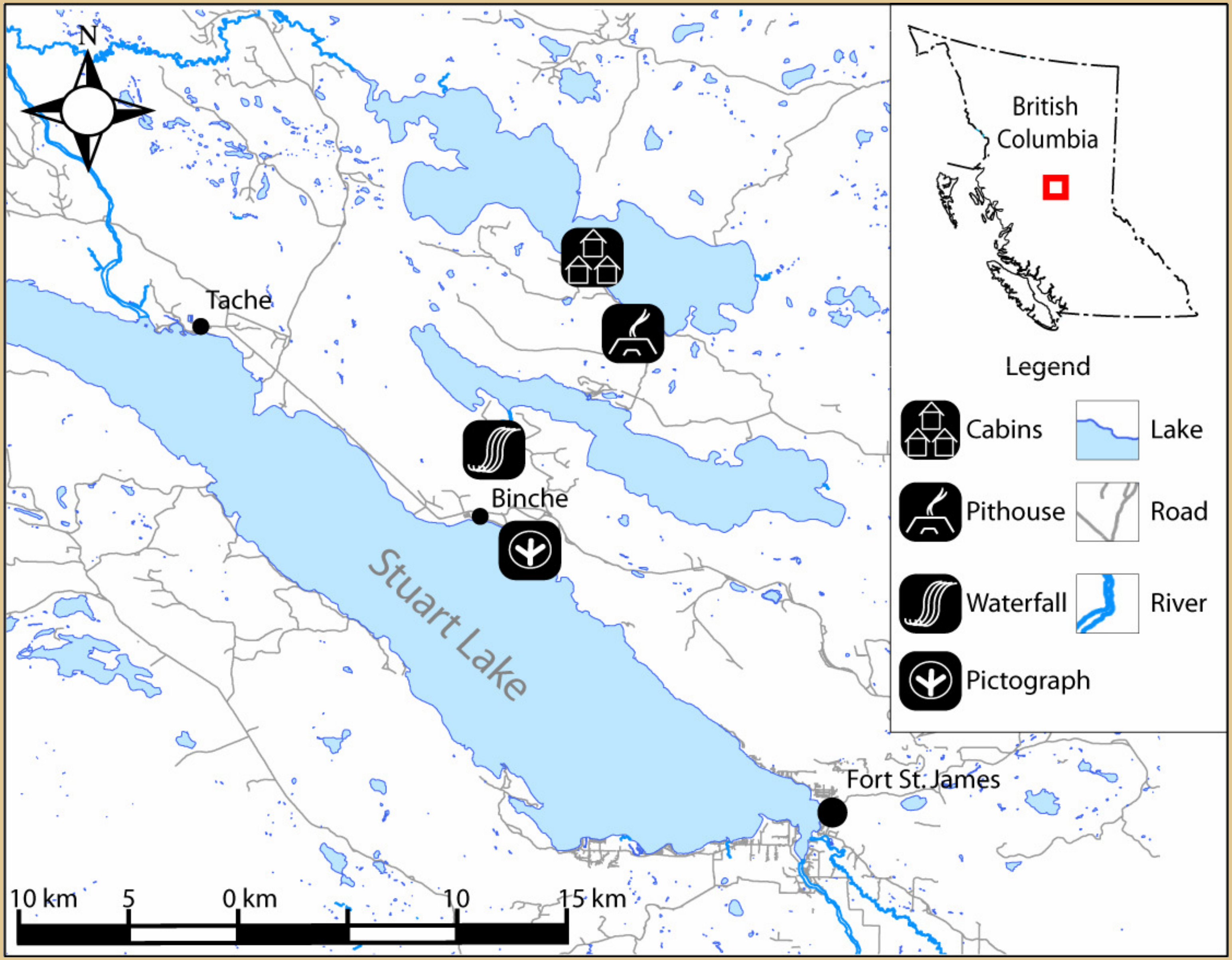


Tache, B.C.

A Research Partnership

- Thesis research part of Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) between Tl’azt’en First Nation & UNBC

Study area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Cabins
Pithouse
Waterfall
Pictograph
Lake
Road
River

Methods to research visitor product preference

- 3 lists (activities, topics, experiences) of 31 visitor preferred features of Aboriginal tourism
- 4 potential products
- 1 list of 8 features relating to the nature of an Aboriginal experience
- Questionnaire development and survey of 337 visitors to Prince George Visitor Information Centre

Study findings: Respondent profile

- Sample skewed towards older respondents (64% were 45 years or older)
- 54% higher educated
- Majority from North America; 33% from Europe
- Adult couples dominant travel party

Preferred product features

Activities	**Mean[a]**	**Std. deviation**
Woodcarving	3.98	0.993
Collecting edible plants	3.90	0.990
Outdoor survival	3.90	0.973
Topics		
Animal & plant life of the region	4.09	0.834
Stories and legends of Aboriginal culture	4.00	0.893
Aboriginal history post-European contact	3.95	0.891
Experiences		
Taking photos of scenic landscapes or wildlife	4.06	0.904
Demonstrations by artisans of artefacts	3.86	0.876
Aboriginal drumming and dance performances	3.82	1.145

[a]Each feature was measured on a five-point scale where 1 = not at all interested and 5 = very interested.

Greater interest from experience?

- Respondents with Aboriginal tourism experience were significantly more likely to be interested in the two products with a primary focus on culture.
- Participants were more likely to be interested in these product if they had:
  - purchased Aboriginal arts or crafts
  - attended an Aboriginal performance
  - or similar experiences

Nature of the Aboriginal tourism experience

- Exploring visitors' enthusiasm for:
  - actively participating in Aboriginal cultural activities
  - their preferred level of contact with Aboriginal hosts
  - their preferred activity level and focus

Tl'azt'en Elders presenting bone tools

Tl'azt'en members and tourists playing traditional game

Nature of the experience

Non-interactive ⟷	Interactive
Relaxed & observational (15%)	Active & involved (36%)
See how arts and crafts are made (40%)	Make arts & crafts yourself (27%)
See drumming & dancing (50%)	Participate in drumming & dancing (22%)
Explore cultural exhibits (32%)	Participate in daily activities of traditional Aboriginal life (30%)
Self-guided experience (18%)	Guided tour (34%)
Casually speak with Aboriginal hosts (19%)	Opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with Aboriginal hosts (41%)

Profile: Aboriginal tourism travelers in Northern BC

- Are older (majority over 45yrs)
- Tend to be higher educated
- Majority from N. America
- Despite secondary interest in Aboriginal culture, almost half the sample indicated interest
- Show higher interest if prior experience of Aboriginal culture
- Want interactive experiences but are somewhat reluctant about participating actively in certain activities

Potential market segments

1. The Culture Seekers
2. The Nature-Culture Observers
3. The Sightseers

The Culture Seekers

- Scored highest on all features
- Interested in:
  - Aboriginal ways of living off the land, Aboriginal stories/legends, outdoor survival, edible plants, traditional cooking
  - overnight stays in traditional Aboriginal housing & cultural camps
- Travel for leisure
- Mostly couples and family and friends without children

The Culture Seekers

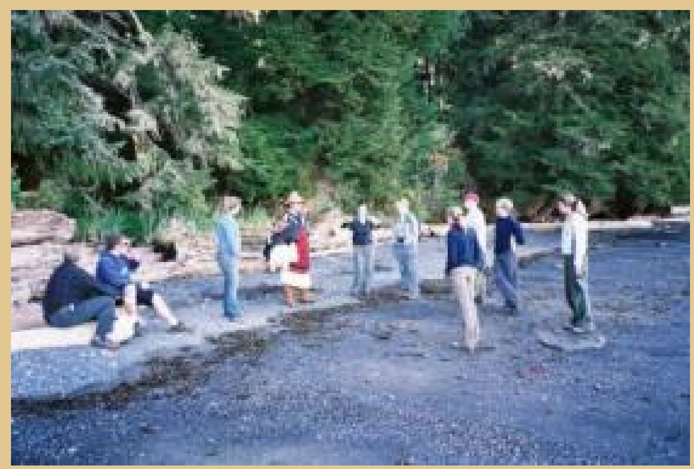
- Similarity to other high-interest segments
- Avg. of **3** previous experiences
- Results suggest market for **culture focused products**
- Nature still plays role in product appeal
- High percentage of **Canadian** travelers

The Nature-Culture Observers

- Interested in a variety of topics:
  - traditional food, edible plants, flora and fauna, Aboriginal ways of living off the land, Aboriginal history & current life, Aboriginal belief systems, and stories & legends
- Appear to have greater interest in features related to nature
- Not interest in multi-day camps or more active participation

The Nature-Culture Observers

- Prefer non-interactive experiences
- Avg. of **2** previous experiences
- May best be targeted with a **mixed nature-culture product**



The Sightseers

- Ranked all Aboriginal tourism product features lowest
- Interested in taking pictures of scenic landscapes
- Not interested in staying overnight in traditional Aboriginal housing, a multi-day cultural camp or hands-on activities
- Neutral response on remaining features
- May need introduction to Aboriginal tourism

So what?

- Northern BC travelers are interested in Aboriginal tourism but there is a need for balance (what does the community want vs. what to do tourists want)
- Most promising marketing opportunities appear to lie with the **Culture Seekers** and **Nature-Culture Observers**
- **Culture Seekers** – focus on Aboriginal cultural content products
- **Nature-Culture Observers** – focus on mixed nature/culture products or nature products with culture as an added-value
- **Sightseers** – potentially require intensive marketing & an introduction to Aboriginal tourism

Overcoming barriers

- Key barriers to development are:
  - Lack of info on visitors' interests and product demands
  - Balancing communities' needs with what tourists want
- Yet:
  - Aboriginal tourism holds potential economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits for Aboriginal communities
- What may be done:
  a) Collecting more detail information on Aboriginal tourism interest
  b) More collaborative work amongst communities & ATBC
  c) Creating awareness around the need for balance

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Questions?

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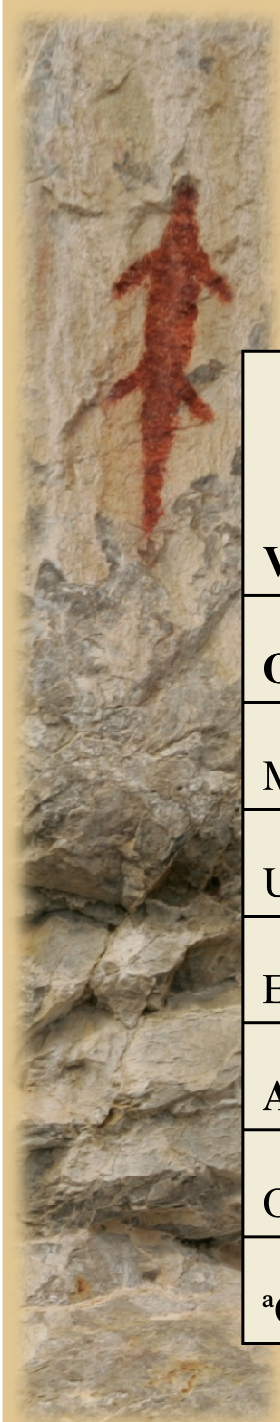

Sociodemographic information of clusters

Variable	**Culture Seekers** (n = 88)	**Nature-Culture Observers** (n = 144)	**Sightseers** (n = 32)
Origin[a]	%	%	%
Majority Canadian	**54**	30	36
USA	16	**26**	25
Europe	25	**40**	32
Age[a]			
Oldest (55+)	**29**	34	49
[a]Chi-square indicated significant differences, $p<0.05$			