

Aboriginal Cultural Tourism: Heritage and Economic Development; Reflections from the Cape Breton Experience

*Keith Brown
Joanne Pyke
Faculty of Business*

*David Johnson
Faculty of Political Science
Cape Breton University
PO Box 5300
Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada
B1P 6L2*

Cultural tourism, Aboriginal cultural tourism and importance of product authenticity are examined. The paper provides a case narrative of Aboriginal cultural tourism involving five First Nations communities on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada. It discusses the role of Cape Breton University, the island's only university, as a linking-pin and neutral venue for local Aboriginal leaders, non-Aboriginal government development agencies and mainstream tourist operators to discuss a long-term unified strategy for Aboriginal cultural tourism development in this region.

Key words: cultural tourism, Aboriginal cultural tourism, authenticity, economic development, policy communities, coherence, Cape Breton Island First Nations.

Introduction

The authors of this paper have taken an inverted pyramid approach to discuss an emerging and distinctive approach to cultural tourism development, its role with respect to local economic development policy, and the promotion of socio-economic progress within North American First Nations. At the outset, cultural tourism is assessed and the dynamic of Aboriginal cultural tourism is presented, with close attention devoted to the importance of authenticity in the Aboriginal tourism experience. The research then takes a more focused approach and presents how recent developments in Aboriginal cultural tourism are illustrative of a special elaboration in sustainable cultural tourism policy and programming, and how Canada's First Nations communities are asserting control and direction in this unique niche development for a variety of economic, social and cultural goals. According to the Aboriginal Tourism in Canada, Part 1: Economic Impact Analysis (2003), while Aboriginal tourism was previously sought mostly by a small niche market, mainstream tourists are now showing a keen interest in participating in Aboriginal tourism experiences.

An internationally renowned tourist destination, Cape Breton Island, is highlighted as a case narrative and a review of its Aboriginal cultural tourism opportunities and challenges presented with reference to local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal government development agencies' involvement in this developing initiative. The paper concludes with a critical appraisal of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives within Cape Breton, and a reassessment of the importance of Aboriginal cultural tourism

to the broader concept of cultural tourism. The authors also stress the importance of the developmental role that can be played by universities in the promotion of emerging Aboriginal cultural tourism policy communities. In particular, the authors stress that Cape Breton University act as a linking-pin, neutral ground, and conceptual/educational/developmental promoter for the five Aboriginal communities and local non-Aboriginal interested parties to discuss matters of shared interest and concern in the advancement of Cape Breton Island's Aboriginal cultural tourism sector.

Cultural Tourism

While it is only in the past few decades that the term cultural tourism has become widely used, the practice is arguably millennia old. The Romans traveled to Egypt to witness a civilization and culture that preceded their own by at least two thousand years and a century ago, the grand tours of Europe, were considered a prerequisite for the wealthy and the nobility (ICOMOS 1996). In the post Second World War era, backpacking across Europe has become a rite of passage for countless North American university students, with the more adventurous, perhaps, trekking off to India and Asia.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's the term cultural tourism began to be used by the tourism industry, but was still referring to a niche market which was perceived to be small, affluent and well educated. (Tighe 1986, McKercher and du Cros 2002). At the 12th general assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Mexico, 1999, the international council adopted the International Cultural Tourism Charter. The charter recognized the organic relationship between tourism and cultural heritage and the increasing tensions that can develop as communities and cultures try to protect their heritage while "packaging" it for tourism consumption. ICOMOS recognized that defining cultural tourism is difficult as the concept has different and at times conflicting meanings to different observers. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines cultural tourism as "movements of persons essentially for cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art and pilgrimages" (WTO 1985). Further refinements of these definitions look to both stratify the cultural contributions within the development of the cultural tourism relationship and to recognize the experiential need of a segment of the traveling public (Richards 1996, Clark 2000 and Chang 2006). It is exactly this type of stratification which places Aboriginal Cultural Tourism in niches which include interests in history, heritage, spiritualism, environmentalism, indigenous rights and pan Aboriginal issues, to name but some of the target market segments.

There are several references in the literature which illustrate that a broadly encompassing definition of cultural tourism has not yet been accepted. Agreement on key elements of the sector appears to be wide spread, but issues remain surrounding the intersections of principle components of art, culture, entertainment and heritage (Richards 1996, Rojek and Urry, 1997). A distinction between heritage tourism and arts tourism has been suggested in relation to time. Heritage tourism becomes essentially an interaction with sites and attraction focusing on preservation of the past and arts tourism focusing on the consumption of present day offerings (Richards, 1996). There is agreement in the literature and amongst practitioners that cultural tourism is growing and has contributed to the diversification of the tourism product within the industry. However, there is

confusion about the definitional depth and breadth of the sector, market segmentation and supporting demographic and psychographic data, and the primary and secondary interest levels towards the product by the consumer/tourist (Hughes, 2002).

As the stratification of cultural tourism grows, the literature is replete with research and argumentation which supports the inclusion of popular culture within the broader definition (Markwick, 2001, Chang 2006). The product offered through tourist business interests may not coincide with market demand. In other instances, it is the interests of participating businesses and communities which can be used as a lobbying effort towards governments to invest in cultural tourism infrastructure (Grefe, 1994). An interesting dichotomy develops as the cultural tourism industries expand. Industry is looking for ever increasing new product while the tourism consumer becomes more concerned about the experience and its authenticity. The issue of authenticity is of importance throughout this sector, but none more so than in the Aboriginal product. The consumer may ask the question, “Is this experience real?” while the Aboriginal elder may feel strongly that their culture is “not for sale”.

Authenticity

Authenticity of experience and product for the cultural tourist is increasingly raised in the literature (Nara 1993, Chhabra, Healy and Sills 2003, Cano and Mysyk 2004). What is the real cultural experience? Is the cultural experience being presented to the tourist authentic or has it become part of the current cultural experience of the community and therefore represented as culturally current? There are several schools of thought on the issue of authenticity as it relates to tourism. One group argues that tourism and tourism products are by nature contrived to create an artificial experience (Brown, 1999 and Greenwood, 1989). Wang (1999) argues the concept of authenticity is contextual and dependent upon the individual. The very nature of the tourist and their identification with the product will heighten the desire and expectation of authenticity of experience. Research using a group of participants in a staged reenactment of the 1744 siege of the Fortress of Louisbourg, a Parks Canada site located on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, Canada indicated historical authenticity of product and experience were of paramount importance (Brown, 1999). The commitment of Parks Canada to historical and archaeological authenticity is not necessarily replicated at other “living museums” throughout North America. As cultural products develop within a geographic location, there is the risk that “authentic” becomes “synthetic” as operators or governments attempt to attract larger numbers or broader ranges of tourist (Markwick, 2001). As “synthetic” cultural practices or attractions merge within the local culture, this form of “emergent authenticity” (Cohen, 1988) can become to be considered authentic by the local population (Nara 1993, Prins 1996, Chhabra, Healy and Sills 2003, Cano and Mysyk, 2004, Brown, 2006).

Mather-Simard (2003) has affirmed this understanding of Aboriginal cultural tourism while also insisting that the “authenticity of products facilities” and “cultural integrity” must be hallmarks of all cultural tourism initiatives within First Nations (Mather-Simard, 2003, p.3). “We hear a great deal about the market searching for ‘authentic’ experiences, wrote Mather-Simard, “and I propose that this is our industry’s greatest challenge. What constitutes an authentic experience? ... I would define an

authentic experience as an accurate representation of that community's heritage through past, present and future evolutions of their culture from their own perspective (Ibid).

Aspects of the Mi'kmaq First Nation in general and the First Nations of Cape Breton Island in particular will be explored further as an exemplar of these developments and debates in Aboriginal cultural tourism.

Aboriginal Cultural Tourism

As the cultural tourism niche market is associated with the importance of history, heritage, art, music, crafts, cultural attachments to geography and place, and the search for cultural identity, meaning and affirmation, it is no surprise that as this aspect of the tourism industry has developed over the past two decades, such development has attracted growing interest amongst members of Canada's First Nations.

This interest is part of a broader renaissance in how Aboriginal Canadians view their place in this country, how they perceive the socio-economic challenges and opportunities their peoples face and how First Nations can assert control and direction of their own economic futures through the advent of self-government. As Aboriginal authors such as Diabo(2003), Hager(2003), Mather-Simard(2003), and O'Neil(2003) have all asserted, First Nations' self-government is integral to improving economic sustainability in First Nations and, as First Nations governments seek the ways and means of promoting economic development opportunities for their peoples, they will be carefully addressing the social and economic environment of cultural tourism operations for their peoples.

According to Barry Parker (2004), a member of the Okanagan First Nation and a national tourism advisor for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, "[t]here is significant market demand for cultural tourism, and this can be translated into real business opportunities for Aboriginal people in Canada and Indigenous people around the world".. "At the same time", he continued, "it is a platform for which people can enhance, sustain, strengthen and protect their cultures" so long as Aboriginal tourism initiatives are undertaken "with dignity and respect for cultures, communities and the environment" (Canada World View, 2004, p. 8).

This twin concern for reaping the economic benefits of commercially successful Aboriginal tourism initiatives while also respecting and promoting the uniqueness and integrity of Aboriginal cultures is echoed by Diabo (2003), Hager (2003) and Mather-Simard (2003). Diabo (2003) has written that while mainstream tourism is largely associated with strictly commercial values centred upon the "commoditization of culture", tourism itself "has its' origins as social and cultural exchanges that preceded tourism as a commercial activity"(Diabo, 2003, P.2). The challenge for those interested in promoting Aboriginal cultural tourism undertakings, according to Diabo, is to develop cultural tourism offerings that are grounded in the reality of given First Nations. "...[T]he engagement of Aboriginal communities in the tourism sector must occur on their own terms and at their own pace, since it is their existence as distinct peoples that is at stake"(Ibid). The key to successful Aboriginal cultural tourism development, to Diabo, is for Aboriginal communities themselves to fully control the planning, development, implementation and on-going management of all tourism initiatives within their lands. In this manner of "self-government", First Nations can realize the benefits of tourism-related economic development in terms of employment, commercial activity, revenue-

generation and community vibrancy while also ensuring that such tourism development serves to respect cultural heritage and traditions, promote cultural authenticity in tourism content, products and messages, and enhance cross-cultural understanding and awareness between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations (Diabo, 2003, p. 2. See also Notzke, 2004, Kortright, 2002).

Hager and Mather-Simard echo these conclusions asserting that while Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives offer First Nations significant potential for economic development, job creation, and opportunities for Aboriginal youth, all such tourism undertakings must be subject to the control, direction and wisdom of First Nations governments, elders, and members of the community. This is to ensure that Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives do not result in the sell-out of Aboriginal culture, that such initiatives are reflective of Aboriginal authenticity in both historical and contemporary presentations of Aboriginal life, and that First Nations communities are fully comfortable with the tourism initiatives occurring within their lands (Hager, 2003, Mather-Simard, 2003). On this point the message from Aboriginal Elders is unequivocal: “Aboriginal spirituality is not for sale, and there is not a place for spiritual ceremonies in tourism products” (Notzke, 2004).

In asserting Aboriginal leadership in the development of First Nations tourism developments, Hager (2003) has commented upon the importance of Aboriginal cultural tourism promoters within First Nations building partnerships with like-minded persons, government officials, elders and community groups within their own First Nation as well as with sympathetic individuals, government officials and business leaders in the non-Aboriginal community. Hager has also emphasized the importance of asserting cultural and historical authenticity in all presentations respecting the nature of Aboriginal life, culture, arts, crafts, beliefs and world views (Hager, 2003, pp.4-5).

A New Trend

Research to date on Aboriginal Cultural Tourism is recent and limited: “A new trend developed during the early and mid-1990s, when the concept of Aboriginal tourism became a ‘hot topic’ nationwide” (Notzke, 2004). The Aboriginal tourism debate in Canada during the 1990’s is that Aboriginal people have been adamant that the concept of “Aboriginal tourism” should designate only those tourism ventures which are characterized by Aboriginal ownership and control. Notzke (2004) notes that the new millennium is bringing great projections for Aboriginal tourism development and operationalization from both within and without First Nations.

The federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has also become seized with the importance of what cultural tourism can bring to First Nations both in terms of its economic and socio-cultural impact. This department has sponsored the inauguration of Aboriginal Tourism Canada (2003) as a national organization mandated the task of promoting cultural tourism development initiatives within Canada’s First Nations, assisting First Nations in the creation of cultural tourism business plans, and in providing the institutional linkages between First Nations, interested federal, provincial and territorial departments and agencies, and relevant private sector tourism developers and marketers. “One route to improving economic sustainability [within First Nations] is tourism, which is proving increasingly attractive as Aboriginal people look for new commercial and job-creation opportunities. There is especially potential for Aboriginal

‘cultural’ tourism, through which Aboriginal people can share various aspects of their customs, traditions, and arts as well as their relationship to the land”(Canada World View, 2004, p. 8). But what would Aboriginal cultural tourism, as a business venture, look like, and what would it entail?

As Aboriginal Tourism Canada (2003), and Notzke (2004) have asserted, Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives, both present and future, will likely share certain fundamental traits. There will be an emphasis on Aboriginal arts and crafts, ranging from traditional items such as beadwork or porcupine quillwork, jewelry and moccasins through paintings, drawings and sculptures, to soapstone carvings. There will likely be an emphasis on music and dancing, traditional foods and ceremonies, all commonly associated with Pow-Wows and other music and cultural festivals. There will be an interest in the development of cultural centres designed to be focal points within First Nations communities for both the members of these communities as well as for cultural tourists seeking to learn about the history, culture and contemporary life of that First Nation. And there will be a strong connection to the land, with First Nations giving visitors a cultural appreciation of Aboriginal connections to the natural environment through such activities as hunting and fishing trips, wilderness hiking and camping excursions, nature flora and fauna walks, wildlife observation, and environmental and ecological appreciation ventures. Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives have the potential to enable members of First Nations to promote their cultural and environmental awareness and sensitivity to members of the general population, both from Canada and abroad, while allowing tourists from a variety of other cultures to experience the historical background and contemporary realities of life on First Nations, and their cultural approach to life, land and the spirit.(See also Brown, 2006, Ryan and Pike, 2003, Brown and Geddes, 2007, Brown and Pyke, 2005)

As of the first decade of this new millennium, however, Aboriginal cultural tourism remains more an idea and an aspiration than a developed reality. While there are certain important initial steps in the creation of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives, such as the UNESCO World Heritage site of Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump in southern Alberta, the K’san Historical Village in British Columbia, and the Wanuskewin Heritage Park in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, these undertakings are still very much pioneering ventures, suggestive of what can be. There remain many difficulties to be overcome in the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives. Notwithstanding the work of Aboriginal Tourism Canada (2003), there has been limited opportunities in the recent past for those interested in such tourism initiatives to coordinate with one another due to the lack of government-business expertise with this market, a lack of a well-established and integrated Aboriginal cultural tourism policy community, and market-readiness. These challenges are experienced by all First Nations regardless of their geographic location.

With respect to the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives Notzke’s (2004) research highlights three important operational requirements to the successful promotion of Aboriginal tourism ventures: professional product identification and elaboration, market development, and the evolution of strategic partnerships. Such partnerships should exist between, on the one side, First Nations leaders, Aboriginal tourism development officers, and Aboriginal cultural tourism product suppliers, and, on the other side, public sector departments and agencies responsible for Aboriginal policies

and regional economic development, and private sector agencies, groups, and entrepreneurs active within local and regional travel industries. The concerns which her research addresses deal with how well the Aboriginal tourism product fits with market demand and the host society's socio-cultural background: what quality partnerships are fully utilized by Aboriginal product suppliers and tour operations; and what is the travelers' degree of familiarity, knowledge and interest in the Aboriginal tourism experience.

Having assessed the theoretical dimensions of Aboriginal cultural tourism this article now turns to a case narrative of how Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives have been and are being developed in one of Canada's premier tourist markets, namely Cape Breton Island. Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia, is located off the eastern most portion of mainland Canada at roughly 47°N, 60°W (Brown, 2006).

Aboriginal Cultural Tourism: The Cape Breton Connection and the Role of the Mi'kmaq First Nations

The Government of Nova Scotia established the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage in 1971. In 1975, revenue from tourism for the entire province was \$380 million. In 2004 revenue topped \$1.3 billion. Tourism officials in Nova Scotia are predicting a 100% increase in revenue by 2012 to \$2.6 billion (Province of Nova Scotia, 2005b, p.21). Cape Breton Island tourism revenues reached \$150 million per year by the late 1980s and exceeded \$219 million in 2004 (Brown and Geddes, 2007).

In 2004 Condé Nast named Cape Breton one of the greatest island vacation destinations in North America. Cape Breton has also won similar accolades from other international travel magazines such as National Geographic Traveler in 2004. In its own tourism promotional material, the Government of Nova Scotia refers to Cape Breton as "Nova Scotia's Masterpiece".

As the tourism industry in Cape Breton has witnessed great growth and development over these decades, this dynamic must be placed in the context of an Island facing the slow but inexorable decline and demise of its traditional anchor industries of coal and steel, coupled with growing economic weaknesses and fragility in the natural resource industries of fishing and forestry. As Cape Breton experienced the economic and social challenges of "deindustrialization" and resource industry "structural adjustment", policy leaders in both the private and public sectors within Cape Breton came to search for ways and means to grow a "new economy" out of the old. The socio-economic challenges confronting officials within federal, provincial and municipal government agencies mandated a role in promoting economic development within Cape Breton, however, were only magnified for those in leadership positions within the Mi'kmaq First Nations of Cape Breton (Johnson, 2007).

Just as Cape Breton suffers from elevated rates of socio-economic disadvantage in terms of unemployment, underemployment, poverty, youth outmigration, under-education and poor health in comparison to the rest of Nova Scotia and Canada (Johnson, 2007) so too do the five First Nations of Membertou, Eskasoni, Chapel Island, Waycobah and Wagmatcook record indicators of greater socio-economic disadvantage in comparison to the rest of the Island. Coupled to and rooted in the facts of greater poverty and disadvantage, members of the First Nations have had to experience and struggle against a historical reality of cultural colonization, racism, discrimination, neglect and

isolation at the hands of the dominant non-Aboriginal population (Dickason, 2002). And just as the non-Aboriginal policy leaders in Cape Breton have sought the ways and means to address and alleviate the socio-economic problems confronting Cape Breton overall, so too have leaders within the Mi'kmaq First Nations sought to promote the socio-economic development of their people.

While all leaders of these First Nations support general policies of Aboriginal advancement through self-government and the recognition and defense of Aboriginal treaty rights to traditional avocations of hunting, fishing, lumbering and gaming, the Mi'kmaq First Nations in Cape Breton have developed some unique and groundbreaking approaches to community economic development. From the mid 1990s on, leaders of all five First Nations have supported the development of distinct Aboriginal programming at Cape Breton University, and leaders at the Eskasoni First Nation have been instrumental in the development of the Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission designed to promote the development of an environmentally sustainable commercial fishery on the Bras d'Or Lakes (ECBC News Release, May 17, 2004). Most well known nationally, however, have been the economic development initiatives with the Membertou First Nation. As Brown and Pyke, (2005), and Scott, (2004) have shown, since the mid 1990s Membertou Inc. has become known for its initiatives in partnering with firms engaged in offshore oil and gas exploration, providing records management for client enterprises, and developing working relationships and establishing Aboriginal job opportunities with firms engaged in the development and implementation of environmental remediation work respecting the on-going cleanup of the Sydney Tar Ponds.

But beyond all of these initiatives, a number of the Mi'kmaq First Nations in Cape Breton have developed explicit policy and program interests with respect to Aboriginal cultural tourism. Over the past decade the leaderships of all five Cape Breton First Nations have supported the promotion of tourism opportunities for their Nations ranging from the economic support of local, native arts and crafts artisans to the support of summer cultural festivals and Pow-Wows. Furthermore, the leaderships of the Wagmatcook, Waycobah, and Membertou First Nations have supported the development of community centres within their nations, with such centres having a direct role to play in providing tourism services via museums, art galleries, cultural exhibits, arts and crafts production facilities, gift shops and restaurants.

In interviews recently conducted with leaders from Cape Breton's five First Nations communities, all leaders favoured the promotion of Aboriginal cultural tourism through the development of Aboriginal product and service delivery to visitors to their communities. All leaders saw such ventures as a means of employment and economic development for their communities, but recognized the care and sensitivity that must precede and inform all such tourism initiatives.

All leaders shared a general concern for the authenticity of product offerings. These community leaders adamantly agreed that they do not want products or services sold which do not portray authentic Aboriginal culture and history. Heritage presenters and product producers must be knowledgeable, sincere, genuine and of Aboriginal descent. The consensus among those interviewed indicates the need for collaborative tourism development initiatives by all five First Nations communities on Cape Breton Island. There was recognition that the uniqueness of each community and its tourism offerings was a cultural strength for the entire Mi'kmaq cultural tourism venture, with

such diversity serving to attract the interest of those non-Aboriginals seeking to learn more about Mi'kmaq culture and identity, history and current life.

Interviewees also stressed the needed involvement of local non-Aboriginal government and tourist operators to further develop and promote Aboriginal products and services for the tourist trade (Thompson, Personal Interviews, 2007). From the late 1990s through the first years of the new century, Aboriginal leaders from these First Nations worked closely with Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation in conceptualizing such initiatives, developing business plans for these undertakings, engaging in local fundraising, and creating teams of local people who would champion these undertakings within their communities, and who would work with the officials at Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation and other public agencies toward establishing such Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives.

Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to investigate tourism initiatives undertaken by the five local First Nations communities on Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. The study is from a host's perspective and discusses what tourist products have been developed by local operators, the importance of product authenticity and what issues these local operators are facing.

In 1999 the Sante' Mawio'mi (Grand Council) established the Mi'kmaq Ethics Committee which sets out a set of principles and protocols to protect the integrity and culture of the Mi'kmaq people (Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch, 2007) as it pertains to research methodology and responsibilities. The SSHRC Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples (McNaughton and Rock, 2004) notes this trend amongst Canadian First Nations research. Any research on Mi'kmaq First Nations is subject to these protocols and this research methodology was formally submitted to the Mi'kmaq Ethics Committee.

The researchers employed a semi-structured interview technique to allow for open dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. A semi-structured interview research methodology was used successfully by another researcher (Notzke, 1999) who has extensive research and personal affiliations with First Nations communities in southern Alberta. This methodology is seen as more respectful of oral traditions of First Nations Peoples as opposed to many survey instruments.

The five Cape Breton Island First Nations tourist operators were asked a variety of research questions relating to:

- products presently available for visiting tourists
- importance of authenticity in product development
- collective development/promotion of products by the five local communities
- future plans for tourist product development

The interviews were analyzed through a thematic approach to determine areas of commonality amongst the First Nation communities.

The Cape Breton Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Initiative: Analytical Reflections

The foregoing overview of the Aboriginal cultural tourism initiative within Cape Breton reveals a business venture still in the state of becoming. This is unsurprising given the relatively recent interest by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal actors in seeking to promote cultural tourism undertakings as a major aspect of economic and tourism

developments within Cape Breton Island. The relative newness of this emerging field of business reveals both challenges and opportunities that need to be recognized and either enhanced or ameliorated by those wishing to see the future success of Cape Breton Aboriginal cultural tourism.

That there is a nascent Aboriginal cultural tourism initiative within Cape Breton is perhaps the single greatest mark of success for those Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians who can visualize the future importance of this tourism industry. At the heart of this tourism venture stand the Cape Breton First Nations, their governmental leaders and elders, and those within these First Nations who have already inaugurated cultural tourism initiatives ranging from the Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre through the Eskasoni Pow-Wow to the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre. Leaders of these First Nations recognize the potential that Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures can offer their peoples in terms of economic development, employment, and the generation of wealth within these communities as well as promoting an authentic portrayal of Mi'kmaq history and culture, and encouraging cross-cultural communication and understanding between members of the Mi'kmaq nations and members of the general Cape Breton community.

The existence of this emerging cultural tourism industry is also a tribute to the work of a variety of governmental and private sector entities within the non-Aboriginal community who can also envisage the future importance of Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures and offerings as a significant component of the Cape Breton tourism reality. Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation has played a lead role in the development of this emerging tourism product while the federal departments of Indian and Northern Affairs and Heritage Canada have gone far in establishing the foundations for governmental understanding and support of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives. As these agencies have championed the cause of Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures within the federal government, they have provided a direction for similar actions and initiatives at the provincial, regional and municipal levels, as well as within the private sector.

This field of cultural tourism offerings, however, should not be a cause for complacency amongst those interested in developing Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures within Cape Breton. While this unique tourism product is coming into being and is beginning to reap benefits for Mi'kmaq First Nations there are certain problematics that will need to be overcome if Cape Breton Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives are to reach their full potential. One is that the Aboriginal leaderships with each of the five First Nations within Cape Breton will need to effectively come together as a unified force providing co-ordinated direction and leadership for all Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures within "Unama'ki"(Cape Breton Island). At present, each First Nation tends to work as a separate actor in their economic development initiatives and their stress on the authenticity of cultural tourism products and services. While each First Nation retains responsibility for its own economic development initiatives, First Nation leaders and their peoples need to be encouraged to realize that, given the unique and special nature of the Mi'kmaq cultural tourism offering, collective and co-operative tourism development respectful of Aboriginal authenticity will yield greater results than individual, un-coordinated and ad hoc initiatives. The whole can be greater than the sum of the parts.

This same admonition also needs to be directed to cultural tourism policy leaders within the non-Aboriginal community. While institutions such as the federal departments

of Indian and Northern Affairs, and Canadian Heritage, and Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation have played a lead role in promoting and encouraging the development of Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives and ventures within Cape Breton, these institutions need to marry their work to a host of other public and private sector organizations involved with the tourism industry within Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, and Canada overall.

As the Mi'kmaq First Nations pursue their goals of developing a major Aboriginal cultural tourism industry within Cape Breton, a number of non-native organizations beyond the federal governmental bodies listed above will have to be involved in the development of this industry due to the fact that a number of other organizations have a direct jurisdictional, organizational and entrepreneurial stake in the development of such an industry. These other organizations range from the Government of Nova Scotia's Department of Economic Development and Tourism Nova Scotia, through municipal Regional Development Agencies such as the Cape Breton Country Economic Development Agency and the Straight Area Economic Development Agency, to private sector tourism industry promotional and marketing agencies such as Destination Cape Breton. All of these institutions have a vested interest in matters respecting economic development within Cape Breton in general, and with respect to the elaboration and promotion of the Cape Breton tourism industry in particular. As Aboriginal cultural tourism ventures are developed and take root on Cape Breton, there will be a need for close interaction and mutual support from all of these interested institutional actors, especially in relation to the institutional sensitivity needed by non-Aboriginal tourism policy leaders with respect to Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives.

Just as the Cape Breton First Nations will need to speak with a single voice if they are to fully realize their cultural tourism potential, so too will the non-Aboriginal agencies and actors interested in promoting Aboriginal cultural tourism have to develop the ways and means to co-ordinate their policy and program development initiatives so as to promote greater coherence in initiative design, development, authenticity and implementation. While all of these agencies and actors again retain sovereign jurisdiction over their own economic development and tourism promotion undertakings, they also need to learn that policy and program co-ordination elicits greater coherence and effectiveness in end results and overall policy community leadership.

The diverse policy community environment perceived here, one encompassing a wide variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups and institutions, while also representing an amalgam of governmental actors from First Nations and federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as a distribution of public and private sector actors, is one that is, by definition, inherently pluralistic, varied, and all too easily disparate. For a policy community to be successful as a community it requires a strong degree of coherence, co-ordination, and shared communication, coupled with the ability to engage in an on-going interchange of ideas, values, attitudes, beliefs, such that the members of the community come to see themselves as valuable parts of a valued community, with the community itself possessing a strong sense of direction and leadership.

As Michael E. Porter (1990) has stressed in his studies of regional economic development initiatives, such successful initiatives are usually founded upon strong policy communities, with these policy communities usually comprising a supportive university or two. The role of the university is then to act as a linking pin for all the

members of the policy community, providing a supportive and institutionally neutral ground where members of the community can come together with interested academics and university leaders on regular occasions to discuss matters of shared interest and concern. Within a university setting members of the policy community can be encouraged both to think about broad strategic trends in their community while also focusing, and receiving advice, upon practical matters of industry tactics and program implementation. A university should also be an ideal setting for probing long-term directions for the community while also critically addressing matters respecting the strengths and weaknesses, the opportunities and threats, of current approaches to policy and program development, and how and why improvements can be made to current undertakings.

Within the Aboriginal cultural tourism policy community in Cape Breton the relevant university to play this vital role would be Cape Breton University. This university already has a strong connection to the local Mi'kmaq First Nations and has a well developed track record for providing academic programming with a distinct Aboriginal dimension. With respect to the development of Mi'kmaq cultural tourism initiatives with Cape Breton, Cape Breton University could serve as an ideal meeting place where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal policy leaders interested in the promotion and development of this unique tourism venture could come together in order to assess current and future opportunities, tourism business capabilities, capacities and requirements, and to promote knowledge and sensitivity respecting the preservation of cultural authenticity regarding Aboriginal cultural tourism offerings.

At the December 8, 2006 meeting of the Board of Governors of Cape Breton University, the Board adopted an Aboriginal Strategy. The strategy builds on the thirty year tradition of Aboriginal programming and research at Cape Breton University which has established itself as the Atlantic Canadian university with the largest enrolment of Mi'kmaq students and graduates.

The strategy will begin with local, regional and then national consultation to ascertain interest in broadening offerings into health sciences, education and policing preparation as well as more targeted programming in economic development. The President has established an Aboriginal Task Force to guide the consultation process.

Conclusion

This paper reveals that Aboriginal cultural tourism has great potential to provide economic growth for First Nations communities. The literature identifies concern for authenticity of tourist product and need for self-governance by First Nations communities with full involvement in all levels of decision making. Aboriginal communities see tourism as a “means to promote better understanding of their history, culture, and values, as well as a means to preserve and build interest amongst their people in preservation and revival of their culture and language” (Aboriginal Tourism in Canada, Part 1: Economic Impact Analysis, 2003). Aboriginal leaders, although they realize the potential cultural tourism could bring to struggling communities, do not ignore the call for unified support from non-Aboriginal interested parties, government bodies and tourist operators.

This case narrative has achieved its objective by presenting a unique situation highlighting Cape Breton Island's five Aboriginal communities. Leaders from these communities realize they must come together collectively to promote Aboriginal cultural

offerings at their respective communities. By working together, these communities can present an image of product abundance and collective knowledge to attract tourists for the long-term. While agreement is reached by Cape Breton First Nations leaders that collaboration to develop and promote Aboriginal cultural tourism is the most viable approach, consensus surrounding authenticity of the tourist experience is unanimous. The literature is replete with evidence to suggest that authenticity must be controlled by the culture of which it represents. Taylor (2001) suggests that if the concept of authenticity is to have any legitimate place in the discussion of culture, its definition must rest with the individuals who “make up” that culture. He argues that due to the recent explosion of interest in “cultural tourism”, authenticity should also be considered important to those involved in the industry itself (Taylor, 2001).

The paper has also identified government’s willingness to become involved with advancing local Aboriginal cultural tourism. These findings are significant because they form the basis of recommendations for Cape Breton Island’s Aboriginal tourism direction. The issue of how to bring all interested parties together to discuss the challenges and opportunities presented by this new niche market is raised. The authors propose that Cape Breton University is the neutral body, where meetings take place to discuss issues surrounding Aboriginal cultural tourism development. Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal entities want Aboriginal cultural tourism advanced and promoted as part of the Cape Breton tourism product. A pattern of cooperation must be established between government, tourist operators and the host communities in pursuit of a common interest.

In its first attempt, this study has advanced the understanding of Aboriginal cultural tourism development in a particular case within Canada. As a result, it has served as a catalyst for further research in this unique market which has recently grown in popularity in Canada and worldwide. As revealed in the literature, the challenges and opportunities presented in this study are not unique to Cape Breton Island’s First Nations communities; however, the direction proposed by the authors has implications for further Aboriginal cultural tourism development in this region and elsewhere. It is hoped that tourists in the near future will not only be visiting Cape Breton Island to experience its culture and beauty, but also for the Aboriginal cultural adventure offered by our local First Nations communities.

References

Aboriginal Tourism in Canada (2003) Part 1: Economic Impact Analysis BearingPoint LP, Goss Gilray Inc. and Associates.

Brown, K.G., Geddes, R. (2007) Resorts, culture and music: the Cape Breton tourism cluster. *Tourism Economics*, Vol.13, No.1, pp. 129-141.

Brown, K.G. (2006) They Danced and They Sang: Cultural Tourism Marketing on Cape Breton Island. Paper presented at Sustainable Tourism with special reference to Islands and Small States, University of Malta, Valetta, Malta.

Brown, K.G., Pyke, J. (2005) Aboriginal Cultural Tourism-Mi'kmaq Ethics. Paper presented at the 35th Annual Conference Atlantic Schools of Business, Halifax, NS., Canada.

Brown, Keith G., (1999) Attitudinal Change: Tourist as Consumer. PhD Thesis, Bradford University, Bradford, United Kingdom.

Canada World View (2004) Aboriginal Planet. *Canada World View*, Issue 23.

Cano, Lucero Morales & Mysyk, Avis (2004) Cultural Tourism, the State, and Day of the Dead. *Annals of Tourism Research* 31 (4), 879-898.

Chang, Janet (2006) Segmenting tourists to aboriginal cultural festivals: An example in the Rukai tribal area, Tawan. *Tourism Management* 27, 1224-1234.

Chhabra, Deepak, Healy, Robert & Sills, Erin (2003) Staged Authenticity and Heritage Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol.30, No 3, pp. 702-719.

Clark, A. (2000) The power to define: meanings and values in cultural tourism. In Robinson, M. et al (eds.), *Reflections on International Tourism: Expressions of Culture, Identity and Meaning in Tourism*. Business Education Publishing.

Cohen, E. (1988) Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 15, 371-386.

Diabo, Mitchell Karhakeron (2003) Aboriginal Cultures and the Tourism Industry. A discussion paper for the National Gathering on Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism, Ottawa.

Dickason, Olive (2002) *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd ed. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Greenwood, David (1977) Culture by the pound: an anthropological perspective on tourism as cultural commoditization', in Valene L. Smith (ed.), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 129-38.

— (1989) Epilogue in Valene L. Smith (ed.), *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 181-85.

Grefe, Xavier (1994) Is rural tourism a lever for economic and social development? *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 2 (1-2), 22-40.

Hager, Barbara (2003) Aboriginal Cultural Tourism: Promoting Your History to the World. A discussion paper for the National Gathering on Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism, Ottawa.

Hughes, H. (2002) Culture and tourism: a framework for further analysis. *Managing*

Leisure 7 (3), 164-175.

ICOMOS (1999) *Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance: the International Cultural Tourism Charter*. Proceedings at the 12th General Assembly, International Council on Monuments and Sites, Mexico.

ICOMOS (1996) *International Committee on Cultural Tourism*, no 6.

Johnson, David (2007) *Regional Development as the Work of Prometheus: A Critical Analysis of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation* in Susan Hodgett, David Johnson and Stephen A. Royle, eds. *Doing Development Differently: Regional Development on the Atlantic Peripher*. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.

Kortright, Robin (2002) *Aboriginal Tourism: blessing or curse? Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism*. Trent University, 2002.

Markwick, M. (2001) *Marketing Myths and the cultural commodification of Ireland: Where the grass is always greener*. *Geography* 86(1), 37-49.

Mather-Simard, Trina (2003) *Aboriginal Tourism, Culture and Communities*. A discussion paper for the National Gathering on Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism, Ottawa.

McKercher, Bob, du Cros, Hilary (2002) *Cultural Tourism*. Binghamton, NY: Haworth Hospitality Press.

MRSB Consulting Services (2006) *Economic Impact Analysis of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation Festival and Events Program*. Sydney, Nova Scotia.

The Nara Document on Authenticity (1993) *Proceedings at Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention*. Japan.

Notzke, Claudia (2004) *Indigenous Tourism Development in Southern Alberta, Canada: Tentative Engagement*. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 12 (1), 29-52.

Notzke, Claudia (1999) *Indigenous Tourism Development in the Arctic*. *Annals of Tourism Research* 26, 55-76.

O'Neil, Beverley (2003) *Traditions and Marketing: Strategies for Developing Tourism with Cultural Integrity*. A discussion paper for the National Gathering on Aboriginal Cultures and Tourism, Ottawa.

Parker, Barry (2004) *Aboriginal Planet*. *Foreign Affairs & International Trade Canada, Canada World View*. Issue 23.

Porter, Michael E. (1990) *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*. New York: The Free Press.

Prins, E.L. (1996) *The Mi'kmaq: Resistance, Accommodation & Cultural Survival*. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace.

Province of Nova Scotia (2001) *Tourism Activity in Nova Scotia – a 25 Year Comparison*. Department of Tourism and Culture.

Richards, Greg (1996) *Cultural Tourism in Europe*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International Publishers.

Rojeck, Chris, Urry, John (1997) *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. Routledge, London, 1997.

Ryan, C., Pike, S. (2003) Maori-based Tourism in Rotorua: Perceptions of Place by Domestic Visitors. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 11 (4), 307-319.

Scott, Jacquelyn Thayer (2004) *Doing Business With The Devil*. Halifax, NS: Atlantic Institute for Market Research.

Taylor, John (2001) Authenticity and Sincerity in Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 29 (1), 7-26.

Thompson, Krista, Personal Interviews, 2007.

Tighe, Anthony (1986) The arts/tourism partnership. *Journal of Travel Research* 24(3), 2-5.

Wang, Ning (1999) Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research* 26(2), 349-70.

WTO (1985) *Developing Tourism*. World Tourism Organization.