

6. Conclusions

A number of key findings have been presented throughout this report. Following is a brief summary of the key conclusions:

- ◆ There is significant demand for aboriginal tourism products globally, and Alberta is well positioned to capitalize on many of the major travel trends of European, Asian, American and domestic cultural visitors.
- ◆ A good base of aboriginal tourism products already exists throughout the province. However, due to a lack of coordination among operators and a lack of understanding by some members of the community of the benefits of tourism, much of this product is not market ready. While operators compete against one another for business on a provincial basis, they need to work together to compete against out-of-province destinations. By working together, they can promote an image of abundant aboriginal tourism product and achieve the critical mass necessary to attract long-haul visitors.
- ◆ While there are no major holes in the “hard” infrastructure, there are some serious issues around the “soft” infrastructure. More specifically, two major issues exist. First, there is a lack of trained staff to run the operations — tourism based training is a must if the industry is to get off the ground. Second, there is a need to improve marketing, particularly at the industry-wide level.
- ◆ Several key actions were identified as being critical to industry survival. Specifically, the industry needs to:
 - develop a vision and long-term marketing strategy for the industry;
 - develop a communications plan to enhance the understanding of the benefits of tourism within the aboriginal community; and
 - develop training programs for tourism industry staff.
- ◆ Based on a product-market match, specific product opportunities for the Alberta aboriginal tourism industry include:
 - aboriginal themed accommodation;
 - aboriginal themed restaurant;
 - aboriginal cultural centre;
 - packaging opportunities; and
 - re-enactive/interactive villages.
- ◆ The aboriginal tourism industry in Alberta is at an early stage in its development. To grow, it must adopt a strategy to gradually improve its coordination, co-operation and marketing efforts as well as its overall product offering.
- ◆ The bottom line is that for the aboriginal industry to grow, buy-in and consensus among the various players (aboriginal operators, bands, chiefs etc.) is critical. The major challenges of marketing, training, social issues and education also need to be addressed.

- ◆ The Alberta aboriginal tourism industry can learn from other destinations like British Columbia, NWT, Ontario, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, New Mexico etc. to understand how the native people representing those areas have developed their tourism industries.

As mentioned at the outset of this report, the intent of the study is to provide a foundation for moving the Alberta aboriginal tourism industry forward so that it can compete for tourists with other aboriginal culture destinations. The report is not intended to provide a detailed business plan; rather it provides a starting point for industry stakeholders. There is still much work and research to be done before any of the opportunities can be brought to market. It is now up to industry stakeholders to grab hold of these opportunities and make the industry world-class.

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