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X'atsull Heritage Village: A Case Study in Indigenous Tourism

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Abstract

This thesis is an Anthropological case study of the work of the X'atsull Heritage Village in British Columbia, Canada. The village is run by members of the Shuswap Nation and is accredited by the Aboriginal Tourism of British Columbia (AtBC). The research is based on fieldwork conducted at the site for a short period in the summer of 2013; the author was essentially a participant observer. The questions that drove this research centred on: concerns about authenticity, the nature of spiritual experiences on offer, and the wider benefits of the cultural encounters that ensued between hosts and guests. The thesis argues that theorist from various disciplines over state concerns about authenticity, and that matters of spirituality are dealt with very sensitively and largely driven by the guests. The key finding is that the cultural encounters between hosts and guests seem to be of great benefit to all concerned; this is not a process by which visitors somehow control their hosts. Indeed, hosts find the experience of running the heritage site to be beneficial in a variety of ways beyond economics: the resuscitation and maintenance of traditions, building of self confidence and playing an active part in their local economy. This thesis is hopefully making an interesting contribution to debates surrounding the nature of cultural tourism, encompassing as it does special features pertaining to indigenous tourism.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY FRAMEWORKS	1
THE X'ATSULL HERITAGE VILLAGE.....	2
LITERATURE REVIEW AND CRITICAL TERMS.....	5
INDIGENOUS TOURISM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA	8
MARKETING	10
POTENTIAL CHALLENGES.....	10
BENEFITS.....	13
SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	15
CONCLUSIONS AND SHAPE OF THIS THESIS	15
CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY	17
INTRODUCTION.....	17
DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF FIELDWORK.....	18
INTERVIEWS.....	20
OBSERVATIONS.....	22
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	23
MY ROLE AS A 'PARTICIPANT OBSERVER'	25
CHAPTER 3: THE QUESTION OF 'AUTHENTICITY'	27
REGULATION AND ACCREDITATION	27
NEGOTIATED MEANINGS	30
DEFINITIONS OF 'AUTHENTICITY'	32
THE AUTHENTIC IMAGE/ MARKETING.....	34
ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF LOOKING AT 'AUTHENTICITY'	38
CHAPTER 4: THE QUEST FOR 'SPIRITUALITY'	41
OFFICIAL VIEWS.....	42
THE X'ATSULL HERITAGE VILLAGE.....	42
MY EVIDENCE AS A 'PARTICIPANT OBSERVER' AND THE VIEWS OF OTHER VISITORS	44
THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS THAT HELP TO EXPLAIN THE SEARCH FOR 'SPIRITUALITY'	46
SOME CONCERNS ABOUT 'SPIRITUAL TOURISM'	48
THE QUESTION OF 'CULTURAL APPROPRIATION'	51
CONCLUSIONS	52
CHAPTER 5: A SHARED ENCOUNTER	53
WHO BENEFITS FROM 'CULTURAL TOURISM' AND HOW?.....	53
WHAT IS FOR SALE IN THESE CULTURAL TRANSACTIONS?.....	57
THE FUTURE OF THE X'ATSULL HERITAGE VILLAGE, AND OTHER SUCH SITES.....	60
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS	64
BIBLIOGRAPHY	67
APPENDICES	74
PICTURES.....	74
BROCHURE.....	80
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	82

Chapter 1: Introductory Frameworks

In view of the interrelationship between the natural environment and its sustainable development, and the cultural, social, economic and physical well being of indigenous peoples, national and international efforts to implement environmentally sound and sustainable development should recognise, accommodate, promote and strengthen the role of indigenous peoples and their communities. (IUCN, 1993)

One arena in which indigenous peoples are being encouraged to become more active in their communities is with regard to ‘cultural tourism’. Heritage sites are springing up in all parts of the world, catering for the interests of local and foreign visitors keen to hear their stories of alternative ways of living in communities hitherto marginalised. Government aid is frequently provided to assist in the work of these sites for they have the potential to bring employment, pride and engagement in regions that might need such a boost. This is the case in western Canada where the X’atsull Heritage Village in British Columbia has been in operation since 1991.

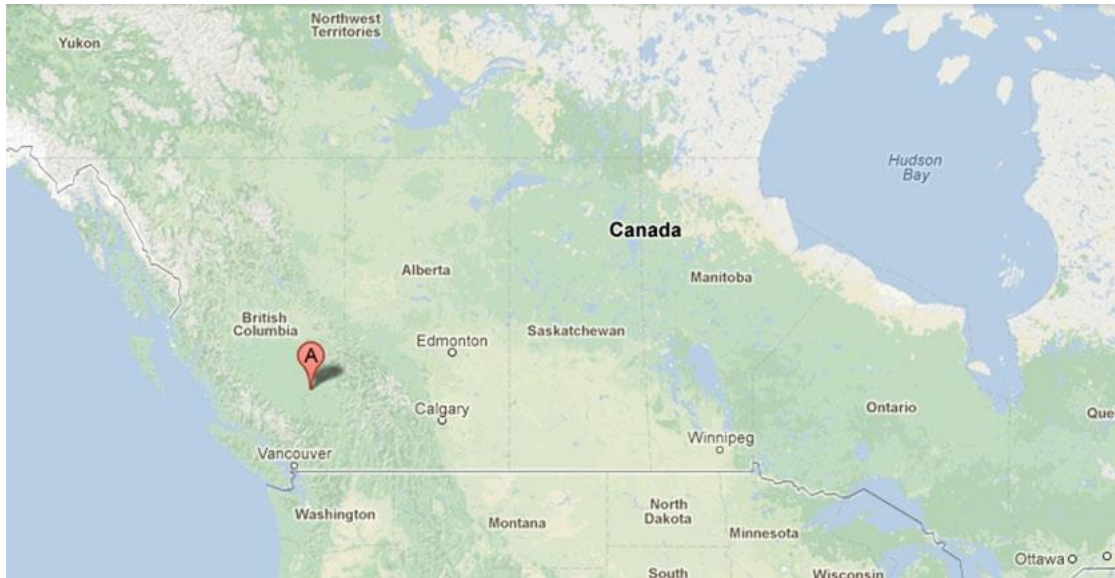
This dissertation concerns the work of this village and discusses the opportunities and challenges posed by ‘cultural tourism’ on the ground. Based on fieldwork at the site in the summer of 2013, this thesis explores the attitudes of managers, hosts, guides and tourists. I examine what is on offer and consider concerns that many commentators, such as: MacCannell (1973), Taylor (1991), Hollinshead (1992) & Johnson (2007), have about ‘authenticity’, the role of regulators who accredit such sites, the pursuit of ‘spirituality’ that is often involved, with attendant concerns about invasion of privacy and loss of dignity for those acting as hosts. This thesis aims to pursue these concerns ‘in the round’, taking the views of all concerned into account, and in so doing question the applicability, significance and relevance of many of these concerns.

Literature on this topic has picked up these concerns and provided a theoretical framework for what is occurring across the world. Yet it has frequently done so from the point of view of government agencies anxious to promote such activity and through the eyes of western tourists. Some concerns have been expressed about the

loss of integrity on the part of indigenous peoples. This might be called a generally ‘top-down’ approach. These approaches have tended to stress benefits in largely economic terms, seeing the satisfaction of tourist needs and expectations as key. By use of fieldwork on site, this thesis seeks to highlight the views of all parties involved, and pay particular attention to what the hosts – or indigenous peoples – get out of the work. Indeed, it seeks to go a little further and examine the experience in the round, emphasising the value of the cultural encounters to all those who come to the site.

The X’atsull Heritage Village

The X’atsull Heritage Village in the Caribou region of British Columbia has been operating as a site for tourists since 1991. It was started with the aid and enthusiasm of some German tourists and has since been taken more fully under the control of members of the First Nations community, partly in order to gain accreditation from the *Aboriginal Tourist Association in British Columbia*, in accordance with its guidelines for *Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Authenticity* (discussed more fully later). The site has won several national and regional awards for its work. The village welcomes visitors to ‘experience the spiritual, cultural and traditional way of life and emphasises experiencing the physical and spiritual rejuvenation by reconnecting with mother earth’ (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>). The site offers ‘authentic’ accommodation, being a tepee and a pit house. I spent approximately two weeks at the site and was given access to all involved, together with the events on offer. The map below indicates the location of the site within Canada.



(X'atsull Heritage Village Location)

The X'atsull is the northern most Shuswap tribe of the Secwepemc Nation, consisting of 17 bands, the largest nation within the interior of British Columbia. Today, there are approximately 564 band members with a growing population. Although each band is independent, they are united by a common language, similar culture and religious belief system. They traditionally followed a 'hunter/gatherer' lifestyle that centred around the salmon fishing on the Frazer River. In the nineteenth century, missionaries and colonisers transformed the Secwepemc culture. Many were wiped out by smallpox, a disease brought by the colonialists. Those that remained were relocated to reserves, where they attended schools run by the missionaries and Governmental officials; almost every aspect of their lives was controlled by the newly founded Canada, indeed, many elements of their culture were prohibited. Like many indigenous peoples today, the Shuswap people are working hard to regain control of their land and rights and rebuild their communities. Their achievements to date have led to various declarations that are recorded on their website (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>).

The X'atsull Heritage Village is located on the Fraser River and is a reconstruction of an old Shuswap community, part of the Secwepemc Nation. The place contains pit houses, tepees, places to cook and make fires, and a recently built barn - a place to give workshops to the tourists. The tepees are not traditional to this nation, but rather erected to provide temporary accommodation for tourists. The site is, however,

known for its ancient associations and spiritual setting; many indigenous people regard the place as 'inhabited' and there is indeed a calm atmosphere about the place.

The Village is open daily during the summer months. Entrance is free and tourists are welcome to explore the place alone or with guides. This is paid for in the form of donations. In addition tourists can book workshops, meals and a place to stay for a fee. Occasionally, 'the elders' (the senior members/leaders of the community) will grant a request from tourists to partake in their key spiritual ceremony involving the Sweat Lodge; this is paid for by donation. Once a month the community offers a cultural event that has proved to be very popular for free. The site also puts on special events celebrating different things, like harvest for example.

Thanks partly perhaps to the German founders and their European connections, the site got off to a successful start some thirty years ago. This waned after the site was handed over to local control, and the impetus for European visitors changed fashion. Things have started to pick up again recently, just as interest in 'cultural tourism' has also taken off. The site invites peoples to 'visit' and was one of the first of its kind in North America; the site claims: 'it's a place for all cultures to experience the traditional Shuswap lifestyle.' They suggest that you can spend from a day to two weeks learning 'the old ways, the crafts and the skills of the native elders.' (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>). The site has won several awards, most notably 'Outside of the box', a marketing award received in 2012 from the Cariboo Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association. It also carries an 'Authenticity award' from 'The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia', granted in 2013. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/info/cultural-authenticity-program>)

The key interests driving my research concerned what the site actually offers, how it is promoted, what events are made available to tourists, and the match between expectations of tourists and what is provided. I was particularly interested in how it was all perceived by managers, guides and tourists; what compromises were necessary to make the 'commercial' venture work; and whether the issue of 'authenticity' was a problem. This spilled over into concerns about invasion of privacy, particularly given the hunt of many tourists for 'spirituality'. My questions always sought to gain the perspective and feelings of those I interviewed about the

nature of the experience, and this eventually turned on what they all saw as meaningful encounters.

Literature review and critical terms

Some comments on terms in use might be helpful before going further. The term 'indigenous tourism' has gained currency in recent years and is usually taken to refer to those peoples around the globe, such as Native Americans, Aboriginals, members of First Nations, who have been drawn into catering for tourists. Hinch and Butler (2012: 9) have offered a pragmatic definition of 'indigenous tourism': 'Indigenous or aboriginal tourism, refers to tourism activity in which indigenous people are directly involved, either through control and or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction'.

Tourism as a serious academic study has only come of age fairly recently, but the more it is studied, the more legitimate and important it is becoming. Many have since explored the complexity of tourist motivations and expectations along with the diversity of responses to tourist arrivals (Strausberg, 2011). The body of work on the topic is constantly increasing and new connections with other fields are being made and explored all the time. If a large body of work commenced in the field of Business Studies, scholars from the fields of Sociology and Anthropology have soon reinforced this.

'Indigenous tourism' is a growing phenomenon in the wider field of 'cultural tourism'. Indigenous culture has become a tourism resource simply because elements of such cultures are recognised by tourists as having something of value: 'a resource is an abstraction that presupposes a person it represents an expression of human appraisal' (Pfister, 1996). Like most resources where the value increases as it becomes scarce, indigenous cultures may be receiving more recognition from the tourism industry as their culture is endangered (Davidson, 1993). As Pfister and Ewert recognised: 'resources have meaning, utility and consequences since they serve as a means to an end (1996:3). This has particular relevance with the Shuswap nation.

The term 'cultural tourism' that has been around for quite a while, and has overtones of groups from the developed world visiting parts of the less-developed world. At its best, cultural tourism incorporates the notion of some kind of cultural exchange, a theme I wish to pursue in this study. The banner of 'indigenous tourism' has been useful in many parts of the world because it has become a way of ensuring that indigenous peoples have been put in charge of the activities, under the assumption that this might afford some sense of control and guarantee greater 'authenticity'.

Anthropologist Valene Smith (1977), writing about tourism in general, wrote about the dichotomy between 'hosts and 'guests' which she argued were opposites, comparable with the idea of 'locals' and 'foreigners'. Smith discussed the power play that is involved in such encounters and was fearful of the potentially damaging effects that the guests could have on the hosts. She did, however, later acknowledge some possible contrary, positive effects that such encounters could provide (Coltan, 2005). Many academics have since criticised this argument, pointing out that such tourist destinations or cultural sites are not static and homogenous communities, and that tourists are not meeting an unbroken chain of tradition. Instead, it is now often argued that cultures are concurrently being renegotiated and redefined, a process in which tourism plays a part (Schele & Weber, 2001). Smith also suggested a model for assessing the potential of 'indigenous tourism' known as the four H's: habitat, heritage, history and handicrafts. (Smith, 1977) She discussed the importance of each 'H' in understanding and producing indigenous tourism.

Habitat is the theme that is key to all others, for the natural environment is at the core of native culture, even in places like British Columbia, where people no longer dependent on the land for their survival - their culture and political identity is still connected to their close relationship with the land. 'The very existence of controversy about certain cultural issues, many of them pertaining to tourism, is testimony to the fact that cultural heritage and the way one relates to it, matters to people' (Notzke 2004:35). History is also a pervasive factor, for a community's history in itself is part of the tourism attraction, as well as a strong influence on how a community views outsiders and tourists in particular (*Ibid*).

James Lett argued that anthropological literature on tourism could be broadly divided into two categories: scholars like Nelson Graburn, interested in exploring the culturally defined meanings that the experience of tourism holds for the tourists, and, those like Dennison Nash and Valene Smith who were interested in assessing the range of empirical effects that tourism has had upon the socio-cultural systems of host societies (Lett in Smith, 1989). While both approaches may be pursued separately this thesis has chosen a path that stresses interrelationships. I interviewed both tourists and indigenous peoples and therefore have information and perceptions on both groups. My focus draws upon both traditions as I seek to learn more about the meaning of interactions and also impact upon the hosts.

Academics drawn from several disciplines have explored tourist motivations. 'A tourist is a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change' (Smith, 1989). It has been argued that for westerners, who are said to value individualism, self-reliance and the work ethic, tourism is in turn valued for being exciting, renewing and self-fulfilling. Tourism provides an ascetically appropriate counterpart to ordinary life (Berlyne, 1968 in Smith, 1989). Many parallels have been drawn between tourism and religion, where tourism is often seen as a sacred journey. Leach (1969) discusses how 'sacred and profane alternations mark important periods of social life and even provide the measure of the passage of time itself'. Often the passing of each year is marked by an annual vacation of some kind, just like after a ritual it is common to feel like 'a new person' (Farber, 1954 in Smith, 1989). Travel is conceived to be a 'magic helper'.

Cultural/religious tourism has been described as 'a form of ethnic relations ... where the very existence of an ethnic boundary creates the tourist attraction.' (Van Der Bergh and Keyes, 1984) MacCannell (1984) suggested that 'when an ethnic group begins to sell itself ...as an ethnic attraction, it ceases to evolve naturally'...the group members begin to think of themselves ...as a living representative of an authentic way of life, with that in mind any decision made regarding lifestyle is not a mere question of practical utility but a weighty question which has economic and political implications for the entire group.

Representations of indigenous culture for tourism are often seen from a modernist, managerial perspective, seeing performance as a business. A business focus would concentrate on the experience of the paying spectator at the expense of 'hosts' representing an original indigenous culture. This approach is synonymous with 'otherness', arguing that this form of culture is incompatible with original culture and thus has a negative effect on it, for it is argued as being exploitative and even silencing and obliterating. This deception might influence the performers who are 'forced to act in ways they never quite were' (Hunter, 2014). Yet these arguments overlook the question of how performers feel about their own roles and the performances themselves (Hollinshead, 2009, in Hunter 2014: 532). It is possible to see cultural performances playing an important part in regeneration and self-determination (Grim, 1996). When 'cultural tourism' is owned or operated by indigenous people themselves it can work differently for all concerned (Zeppel, 2002 in Hunter 2014). Performing culture, it has been argued, can boost community morale and cultural self-awareness (Markwick, 2001, in Hunter 2014)

Indigenous Tourism in British Columbia, Canada

There has long been an interest in Canada's indigenous peoples. When the Canadian Pacific railway (CPR) was built in the early twentieth century, romanticised pictures of the 'noble savages' were used in their marketing campaigns (Shanley, 2001). Indigenous Peoples are still trying to dismantle many of the 'false' images produced at that time. Promoting a 'culturally accurate' indigenous tourism means overcoming stereotypical images of 'native' people and their lifestyle, usually quite different in reality. The reality for many first nation peoples in BC today is vast unemployment, low education opportunities and levels of achievement, with the consequence of abiding low self-esteem. These people are thus rendered vulnerable in modern society and this has been called (Frideres, 1988) the 'culture of poverty' that needs to be overcome through the acquisition of relevant education and skills, and through all kinds of empowerment. It has been demonstrated that children from First Nations do not fare well in western style education systems, yet perform much better when permitted to pursue more vocational paths that emphasise their practical abilities (Notzke, 2004).

Such people have easily trained to become good guides, storytellers, and craftspeople with a clear role in the tourist industry.

In the Canadian context, given that indigenous peoples have lagged behind in economic development and face many social challenges, ecotourism appears to be a viable alternative. Many commentators see 'Ecotourism' development not just as an economic strategy, but also as a means to strengthen the position of First Nations in regional and national development policies' (TRN, 2003). 'The development of ecotourism is seen as an integral aspect of this process towards indigenous control, self-reliance and improvement of social and economic conditions.' It has been heralded as an 'alternative, sustainable development initiative particularly in remote communities located in north and central British Columbia.' Many First Nation communities in BC have already taken steps to develop tourism ventures (Nepal, 2004). Whilst tourism can play a significant part in the revival of stagnant economies, it is important to ensure that the necessary needs, and values of indigenous peoples and their natural resources are protected.

Discussion of the benefits of cultural tourism is often pulled towards economic gains for all concerned, yet there are other benefits, for it has also been seen as a way to strengthen traditional land based activities (Notzke, 2004). Transcending the issue of tourist development has been the drive for greater political autonomy over traditional resources that have supported traditional ways of life (Burkes, 1994). The number of native owned tourism enterprises in British Columbia has doubled since 1983, making it 'the fastest-growing sector of BC's tourism economy' (Zukowski, 1994:44). The fact that these enterprises are native owned suggests greater political autonomy. As Kaiser and Leibr (1978) have stated 'tourism in its broadest generic sense can do more to develop understanding among people, provide jobs, create foreign exchange and raise living standards than any other economic force known.'

The *Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia* (AtBC) is a company that aids the growth and promotion of a 'sustainable and culturally rich aboriginal tourism industry'. They work closely with business entrepreneurs and government organisations to ensure 'quality experiences'. (I was lucky enough to interview a member of the team during my fieldwork and learn more about their work – see later).

In 2010 AtBC produced an ‘authenticity program’ that featured five certified ‘Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Products’, and now in 2014, has fifteen experiences which it claims, provide the ‘promise’ of a quality, respectful, authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism experience, that distinguishes it from that of other less authentic options.’ My main field site had achieved an Authenticity award from AtBC.

Marketing

The ‘exotic other’ has long been subject to the ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry, 1990) - as long probably as ‘tourism’ has existed. In many countries, Canada included, lively indigenous images have been used to promote the country as a tourist destination. (Notzke, 2006) Only comparatively recently, however, have indigenous peoples started to become more actively involved, as they have taken greater control of what has been occurring, playing their own part in mediating exchanges (Notzke, 2004). One aim of this introduction is to identify and reflect upon what has been written about ‘cultural tourism’ that has informed my research, together with noting literature produced more specifically about the work of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Much has been written about the negative effects of tourism and its limitations, about mistakes made with sad consequences. The field is filled with paradoxes and challenges. However, the many benefits of tourism have also been acknowledged, for when done well, tourism has contributed positively to economic independence, cultural revival, education and opportunities for effective cross-cultural encounters. Indigenous tourism – which may encompass ‘aboriginal’, ‘native’, and ‘First Nations’ depending on the literature - is the fastest growing tourism sector; it is a fairly new niche product operating in a very distinct cultural, socio-economic and political environment.

Potential challenges

Anthropologists and government’s spokesman alike have been keen to stress positive aspects of indigenous tourism yet there are clearly many problems or challenges. A classic paradox of ‘Indigenous Tourism’ is that guests want to relate ‘through a

foreign land through an alien culture, but do so within a comfort zone that leaves them with a feeling of alienation' (Altman, 1989; and chapter three of this thesis). The arena is fraught with many difficulties for all concerned, issues like: who owns the rights to the culture? Is it appropriate to promote a culture of which you are not part? Does marketing cultural products alter their worth? How 'authentic' can a cultural performance be and who decides? These are all contentious questions that have received a host of different responses (Jack et al, 1993). Whilst these are very real concerns, the reality of what is being portrayed may often be less important than the perception – the motivation to discover and learn about the different culture (Richards, 2004). All parties participate in a profitable business which may threaten the integrity of those involved, yet also contain the potential for sowing the seeds of regeneration for many threatened minority groups (see findings discussed later).

It has been well said that 'there are as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it' (Taylor, 2001:8). But as Taylor continued:

This however, should come as no surprise, especially upon consideration of the persuasive force that the notion of authenticity wields in western ideological discourse, and the many users to which it may be put therein. Authenticity has become the philosopher's stone for an industry that generally seeks to procure other people 'realities'. In tourism, authenticity poses as objectivism. It holds the special power both of distance and of 'truth.' These are vital components in the production of touristic value. Fundamental to the authenticity concept is dialectic between object as subject, there and here, then and now. (Taylor, 2001: 8)

Tourists, Taylor continues, therefore all have different ideas of what constitutes authenticity, based on their own ideas and perceptions of reality. It should be up to the 'hosts' then to decide what kind of expectations they are willing to cater to and with that hopefully educate. (Taylor, 2001: 46) And this of course works all ways, for all parties hold different views of themselves and are engaging in relating to the others. The very word 'authenticity' is mired in images of some 'essence', 'tradition' and notions of opposites such as 'fake'; this is clearly an emotional issue (see chapter three). Hence the contrasting views of Macintosh who noted that although tourists may express 'an interest in informal contact with aboriginal hosts and deeper involvement in their ethnic experience, this must be taken with a grain of salt', for

tourist experiences tend to be of a brief and rather superficial in nature (Macintosh, 2004: 12). Likewise, for Johnston, author of *Is the Sacred for Sale* (2007), ‘the ecotourism industry creeps into the deepest recesses of culture and community life and violates the full spectrum of indigenous rights culture and spirituality’ (Johnston, 2007 in Grimwood, 2011:52).

This concern that tourism may be invading more and more cultures, has been picked up by others, hence, Kutzner, Wright and Stark speak of:

The tourists’ thirst for pristine environments and cultures has driven the tourism industry to explore opportunities beyond the borders of easily accessible areas. Yet with the stranger’s gaze invading the space of indigenous inhabitants comes the potential for a myriad of cultural impacts from acculturation to commodification, exploitation to loss of identity. (Kutzner, Wright, Stark, 2009:1).

This has naturally led others to note that communities must consider carefully what they are doing and seek to control what occurs in their name (Notzke, 2006). While much is being written about the economic benefits of such work, and also about the challenges and benefits set against the problems, it is my belief that we need more on how all those involved ‘perceive’ what is happening and are truly reflective about it. How do they feel about the problems of ‘authenticity’ and ‘privacy’ and the boundaries beyond which it would be improper to go?

If cultural tourism - the viewing of one culture by another - has the potential to be quite invasive, altering the relationships between the visitors and those visited, ‘religious and ceremonial’ tourism which now seems in demand might seem a step too far. While the western world has become inured to the sight of tourists flocking around a cathedral while services are being conducted, this still seems ‘tricky’ when it comes to cultures and religious practices about which we have even less understanding. What really occurs for both participants and observers when all are present at a supposedly ‘religious ceremony’? On the other hand it is not necessarily the case that religion is somehow more vulnerable to tourism than other parts of culture it could be that religion in tourism is primarily about rituals which operate at the level of performances, which very often have audiences. Furthermore, rituals are

often performative acts that involve audiences, traditionally and in modern settings (Bell, 1997).

One well-observed challenge picked out by many scholars, particularly those on the left, relates to the argument that indigenous tourism is another form of cultural imperialism, a new form of assimilation (Nash, 1989). There are many cases throughout history where tourism has proven to be disastrous to indigenous communities resulting in conflict, violence, and even displacement (Colchester, 2004). For example, McLaren (1999) reported that beach hotels have displaced traditional fishing communities that lived on the coasts of Penang in Malaysia and Phuket in Thailand. Similarly, a Mohawk uprising in Canada was sparked by plans to extend a golf course on their burial grounds, not to mention the native Sioux working as low wage labourers in a white owned tourist industry that claimed to promote their land and culture (McLaren, 1999).

The challenge for 'hosts' lies in how to share elements of their culture without compromising integrity. As CNATA puts it: 'there can be no sustainable product without a sustainable culture'. An example here concerns debates about the appropriateness of including tourists in 'sweat lodge ceremonies' (see findings discussed later), which remains a contentious issue in many circles. (Deloria, 1999) A 'sweat' is a physical and spiritual cleansing, the significance of which may vary widely between groups, communities and leaders (see discussion of this later). First Nation Elders had a meeting about this in the late 1990s, and the message from them was unequivocal: 'aboriginal spirituality is not for sale and there is no place for spiritual ceremonies in tourism products' (Notzke, 2010:47). It was felt at that date that this message ought to be communicated clearly to the tourist industry.

Benefits

Tourism abounds with contradictions and compromises for all concerned, yet by and large, its benefits are extolled by people on all sides. As Greenwood (1976) asserts 'to prohibit all change is nonsensical; to ratify all change is immoral.' There is a balance to be struck if indigenous people are going to be able to gain some satisfaction from

explaining their rituals and beliefs without fear of prejudice and misconceptions, in an open and honest fashion, which they control.

More recent discussions of cultural tourism have centred on notions of 'empowerment', 'authenticity' and 'sustainability' (Scheyvens, 1999, Sofield, 2003). Ryan (2000) acknowledges the role of indigenous peoples within tourism, the importance of their culture as a tourist 'product', and issues surrounding authorisation (Nepal, 2004 in Ryan and Huyton, 2002). Those who argue for the benefits of indigenous tourism acknowledge that through economic stability and by reinstating traditional practises, indigenous people can reclaim self-determination and self-reliance. By sharing their culture and values, non-indigenous people will gain an understanding of their views, and indigenous peoples in turn will gain opportunities to assert their rights and autonomy (Pfister, 2000 & Smith and Ward, 2000). As indigenous tourism is a fast growing market - and has great power to cultivate change and potential damage - surely what is needed is an understanding in what makes these cross-cultural encounters safe and effective? For Johnston the answer lies with individual tourists: 'choosing to cultivate mutual respect, empathy and understanding to shape his or her relationship building with indigenous peoples' (Johnston, 2007).

Amongst the many benefits extolled by commentators is the feeling that tourism boosts self-confidence, provides opportunities for teaching children, and may help in the social welfare of indigenous peoples. It is also claimed, under the banner of sustainable development, that indigenous tourism encourages smaller enterprises at the local level and pays attention to the informal economy. As we have seen, it also promotes the delegation of power to local self-reliant communities. (De Kadt, 1993:49) It is argued that the traits of sustainable development includes: ecological soundness and consideration; small-scale developments; the consideration of all, including future generations; and community involvement in decision making. These traits are also familiar characteristics of many of the new alternative models for tourism development.

Scope for further research

As greater demands are placed upon indigenous groups to play their part in tourism, is it possible to discern some 'ethical' ground rules for best practice? If so, are these lessons to be learned from those like the Australian Aboriginals who have gone first in comparison to many minority groups of northern societies that are only just feeling their way in this territory? For as Schele and Weber (2001) have stated, 'authenticity'- for example - 'seems to be more of a problem for western academics than 'shamans' (Smith, 1989). It is interesting that ATBC is looking to control by indigenous people as a key factor in driving good practice.

The Shuswap Nation has created a community handbook that sets up some guidelines to help ensure positive cross-cultural interactions. One such guideline cautions teachers not to present intangible elements of culture in isolation, for de-contextualising or simplifying stories and rituals could diminish their significance.' The presentation of legends, for example, in isolation of their purpose may trivialise the importance of beliefs and values that were inherent in the stories (Jack et al, 1993). As Bisset, et al (1999) and other scholars have stipulated, interpreting indigenous culture ethically is about asking for permission and showing respect and awareness. Responsible tourism is a job of not transporting visitors 'into lovely country, but of rebuilding receptivity both for the traveller and for those organising such tours (Leopold 1996: 295). For these encounters to be beneficial then it is necessary to place the contact between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in the context of cross-cultural experience. (Pfister, 1999) I have thus looked carefully at people's perceptions and motivations of tourist encounters, asking both hosts and guests, what they think of potential problems, like that of authenticity and what motivates them to share or seek such encounters.

Conclusions and shape of this thesis

As we can see, indigenous tourism is at a tentative stage of development. There are many understandable reasons for native communities to be fearful and reluctant to

take risks; they have good historical reasons not to trust in government either central or local.

This dissertation proceeds by way of a discussion of sources and methods that have shaped my work. I then have separate chapters on the big issues of interest to anthropologists and those concerned with cultural tourism, namely the question of authenticity and its significance, the quest for spirituality and its challenges, and the nature and value of cultural encounters. It is the central argument of this thesis that research based on a 'bottom up' approach, and considering views in the round, finds indigenous tourism, as exemplified by the X'atsull Heritage Village is in rude health. Moreover, the key to that success lies in the value of the cross-cultural exchanges that the site facilitates.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Research institutions and practitioners are called upon to commit themselves to undertaking research that is relevant, participatory, based on indigenous culture and language of the people and that would serve the needs of the local communities. UNESCO (1996)

Introduction

Through the rise of academic awareness of indigenous issues and policies along with the development of an international indigenous movement, modern research has shifted its scope from research done *on* to research done *with and by* indigenous peoples. (Saugestad, 1998) This development has had a big impact on representations of indigenous peoples. Too often, indigenous peoples have been portrayed in an exotic and romanticised way, emphasising their unique ‘harmonious’ connection with land. But thanks to the aforementioned developments and awareness, there has been a change in both the means of production and distribution of research. As Saugestad (1998) argues further, this change is reflected not only in the research that is done, but also in the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the political and advocacy significance the collected knowledge might play for the latter. Brantenberg (1999) supports the role researchers play in the transmission process of indigenous knowledge, and knowledge on indigenous cultures. In this new light, researchers are no longer perceived just as academics, but as advocates for the rights for others to ‘self expression autonomy and identity’, and informants are becoming ‘patrons and brokers of knowledge’ (Brantenberg, 1999: 263).

In cultural tourism research - as in most other social research - two contrasting paradigms can be distinguished: positivism and phenomenology. The former tries to explain human behaviour through cause and effect, whereas the latter aims to understand and interpret human actions through an individual’s own reality. (Finn et al, 2000) The second approach requires qualitative studies, aiming through a fairly small amount of respondents and observations to gain in depth insights into a particular social reality. (Melkert and Vos, 2010) Social actions and relationships,

because they are driven and inspired by motivations, attitudes, beliefs, values, meanings and emotions, cannot be understood simply in terms of cause and effect, and cannot be reduced to universal quantitative laws. Within this paradigm small-scale research, is seen by Appadurai as ‘beautiful’ (1986). This chapter will present my experience in the field, how I collected my data and why, as well as my observations and experience.

Description and history of fieldwork

The data for the fieldwork was collected in Canada over the period of six weeks from June to July 2014. The main research site was the X’atsull Heritage Village located in the Caribou region of British Columbia. I spent approximately two weeks at X’atsull Heritage Village, British Columbia, Canada by prior arrangement with the site manager. Even though I had checked thoroughly that the site seemed to offer appropriate activities, everything turned out differently on arrival – fortunately, something that I had been warned about with fieldwork!

The X’atsull Heritage Village is more remote than I had expected. My original plan to spend several weeks in the village had to be quickly abandoned, since – it turned out – nobody was living at the site, and it would have been quite dangerous for me to have lived there on my own given the wildlife in the area, notably bears (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com/>). I quickly improvised alternative plans, hitched a ride to the nearest town, Williams Lake, and after some difficulties eventually found a place to stay with a young couple. This town is roughly forty kilometres from the heritage village, so this cut my opportunities to visit for I had no transport of my own. Nevertheless, I did make a number of successful visits when events were occurring and managed to interview a good range of people involved, out of which I gained ten ‘formal’ interviews. When more people were at the site for events, I also stayed over on the campsite to share in the experience.

This site is where the majority of my interviews and observations are from. The rest of my trip comprised of different activities all in effort to get a better understanding of First nations in British Columbia, specifically their involvement in tourism. My trip began in Saskatoon, a province located in the middle of Canada at the (Native

American and Indigenous Studies Association) conference, which gave me insight into a range of issues being explored in academia regarding Native Americans. The rest of my trip involved visiting other tourist or heritage sites and museums, attending 'powwows' and speaking with a range of different people about issues regarding First Nation tourism. This main field site, along with my other experiences, thus provides a small-scale, qualitative case study on Indigenous tourism in British Columbia.

My research in the area thus came to comprise of interviews and events held at the Village, the acquisition of other perspectives from tourist services at Williams Lake, and visits that I was able to make to other sites in the area. I was also able to attend the Annual Powwow held for North Vancouver, to visit the Secwepemc Nations Museum and Heritage Park in Kamloops, and a heritage park in Vancouver where I spoke to a representative of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia. The site at Kamloops consisted of a school, a museum and a heritage part. The old school was a harrowing reminder of what the children had suffered, while the museum held a good variety of self-produced literature and videos about the Secwepemc Nation. It was interesting to compare sites, for this one had many boards with explanatory text, but no guides on hand to provide fuller detail and answer questions. I camped with groups who had also visited the X'atsull site while I was there and was able to glean more information about their perspectives.

The 26th Annual Squamish Nation Powwow was an event open to all interested parties from Canada and overseas. A 'powwow' is a Native American celebration that facilitates meetings, the renewal of friendships and discussion of ways in which the culture is being kept alive. Members of the Squamish nation dress in their regalia (their traditional costume) of which there are many different kinds. People sing, dance and perform. Some songs and dances were competitions, some were prayers, and in this scenario the audience was asked to turn off all recording devices out of respect. Some were also meant for giving thanks, and for these the audience was asked to participate if they wanted. Traditional food is served; this will vary across the first nations, but the main dish during this event was salmon (being on the coast)! The place exercised a ban on all alcohol and drugs. This was a wonderful example of culture being very much alive and celebrated: people were proud to share and people of all ethnicities joined together. (<http://www.westvancouver.com/squamish-nation-26th-annual-youth-powwow>)

Interviews

The qualitative methods employed in my fieldwork, consisted of participant observation, semi structured interviews and informal conversations as well as my own observations and perceptions. My data is based on a series of interviews with those participating in indigenous tourism at the site and the area concerned. I prepared semi-structured interviews for the different groups of people (First Nations, Tourists, Managers), centred on topics as opposed to strictly ordered questions. Often the interviews took their own direction, which I could allow for and enjoyed. I believe this approach was effective in gaining insight into the views, motivations and opinions of the persons involved, as well as for allowing the individuals to discuss important issues that I may have overlooked. It was important that the individuals had the chance to discuss with me anything they deemed important, to ensure their voice was heard, in concordance with Bagele Chilisa (2012) research paradigm. I was also fortunate enough that with time, as people became familiar with me; it became possible to just ‘hang around’ with people, having informal chats. Heritage sites like this one make relatively good venues for researchers, for the hosts are accustomed to foreigners and their nosy questions.

I had three different semi structured interviews; each catered to each group that I was interviewing. Hence there are some common and some specific questions for indigenous participants, visitors as well as those who organize the tours and sites. I organized my questions into four themes. First, I enquired about their background, to the hosts for example, I asked, how they have come to work there, and their reasons for being involved in the heritage village. Secondly, I asked about the ritual and ceremonies on display, their own religious inclinations and their involvement in the rituals. Thirdly, I wanted to open up discussions of their perceptions and feelings of what is going on. Finally, I hoped to gain their views on future developments in the field. I also investigated the different terms of conduct set out for all those involved, and if there are any issues concerning ‘cultural authenticity’ that affect the tourist experience. I applied these questions to all groups and allowed subsidiaries to emerge in the discussion.

Interviews pose problems, like any other method, but they have enabled me to gain personal insights and nuances of feelings. Semi structured interviews have proved to be time consuming, but have enabled me to operate to a relatively broad agenda and be reasonably flexible in response to individual interviewees. Knowing that I wanted to have at least one formal interview from the different people involved in tourism; the visitors, the indigenous people that work at the site and those that manage the site, I selected the people to interview accordingly. I had many informal conversations with many people involved in the site, but it didn't always feel appropriate to pursue this as a formal interview. This was a big learning curve for me, to know who and when to interview formally. It felt much more comfortable and less intrusive having informal chats with people. But I understood the importance of having the structured recorded interview, to ensure I collected the information I needed.

The formal interviews were conducted once I had received verbal consent after having explained the nature and purpose of my research. Given the limitations of an MA level study, my sample group is necessarily small, yet there is much value to a small case study. My formal and informal interviews and observations have provided with me with good quality data. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:5) indicate that 'qualitative methods are used to address research questions that acquire explanation or understanding of social phenomena and their context'.

One advantage of the interview process is that it allows for possible identification and elaboration of other areas of the experience that may prove useful in the research. A potential disadvantage of interview methods, however, is the issue of researcher bias; for example, the way the researcher asks a question can influence the participant's response, thereby creating a situation where the participant may provide answers he/she believes will please the interviewer. Researchers need to be capable, skilled, and aware of their own, as well as the participant's dynamics in the interview process. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:697). The fact that I was young and female may have helped people relax with me and forget about the microphone; it may also have reduced the sense of power imbalance that some commentator's feel occurs when interviewers are asking all the questions. . The sophisticated levels of skill required to interview with sensitivity - and to ensure a respondent is fully at ease after the interview - are often underestimated (*Ibid*). This I was especially concerned about, for whilst my topic does not appear initially sensitive, we are dealing with people that

have experienced a form of ‘genocide’ and are only recently regaining their voice and confidence. Every interview touched on sensitive topics and it was a steep learning curve to know how to deal and respond to it.

There may also be problems with ‘researcher bias’ affecting body language, manner, tone and selection of key words for emphasis. There is always the possibility that interviewees seek to give answers that they think are ‘correct’. All I can say here is that I have attempted to conduct these interviews with due care and sensitivity, while remaining vigilant to the pitfalls noted above. While the interviews provide great detail, it is obviously impossible to claim that they are representative. This poses a classic challenge relating to interviews in that any communication is a dialogue, is co-created, and it is thus impossible to eliminate all traces of ‘bias’. Rather, we need to embrace the fact that ‘inevitably, the analysis is a joint product of the participant and the analyst’ (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; 80).

I eventually gained formal interview data from ten informants. These included; two managers (one from the site one from AtBC), three hosts and four tourists. With the permission of my informants I recorded these interviews and later transcribed them. These interviews have served as the central data for this study. Given the time constraints attached to my project and the opening hours of the site together with availability of people, I feel that this data yield has proved acceptable for my study. What it lacks in quantity it makes up for in quality.

Observations

I acted as a participant observer for context and support for my interviews. The time spent at the village allowed me to be both interviewer and observer. I actively engaged in the tours and rituals and the whole experience available. I took extensive notes documenting what I saw and my perceptions of what is happening, I also, often, when appropriate took photographs as visual support for my work. Additionally I tried to record the music and the sounds of the surroundings. David Silverman talks about explicit and tacit knowledge, tacit knowledge being cultural understanding, which are known but not expressed in direct ways, instead are revealed through speech whether in casual comments or lengthy interviews (Silverman, 2010) Fieldwork is largely about making inferences from what you see, hear and experience;

all in an effort to understand the people involved. It is neither a merely qualitative or quantitative methodology; it integrates both approaches. Its methodological principle is cultural relativism, observing others according to their own cultural logics and confronting these observations with anthropological theories, categories, concepts, ideas and hypothesis about what is being studied (*Ibid*). I feel confident in this procedure because, ‘participant observation is a tool that requires researchers to “immerse [themselves] in the [culture] ... and experience it first hand in its diverse settings’ (Meyers: 1992: 22; see also Clifford et al, 2010). In my fieldwork I feel I experienced a good range of what is entailed in being a participant observer and would agree with Meyers and his view that this process ‘enhances validity of the data, strengthens interpretation...[and] helps the researcher to formulate meaningful questions’ (1992: 29).

Ethical considerations

I applied to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services for clearance to undertake this research. In the process I agreed to protect the anonymity of my interviewees and to file the material securely – all in accordance with standard procedures. No names or means of identification may be found on the files. As should be clear from this thesis, no names of people are given and every effort has been made to ensure that quoted material may not be easily traced and attributed. I obtained verbal consent for use of information gleaned from the interviews from every interviewee.

Although people may appear in some of my photographs they will not usually be easily identifiable and I have gained permission from the site hosts for use of photographs. I have also agreed with the site hosts that I will send them a copy of my final thesis in the hope that they might be able to make use of it; I also think it will be useful to supply a copy- with the sites’ permission - to AtBC. By this means I hope that my research will be of practical use to the Shuswap people. Bagele Chilisa has noted that so often academic research methodologies exclude the knowledge systems of the historically marginalised from the knowledge productions, which only impedes and creates academic imperialism. My research thus intends to ensure that the observations, concerns and perceptions of those at the centre of the research will be valued, acknowledged and represented (Chilisa 2012: 13).

As a student of indigenous studies, with a western academic background, my position will largely be that of an outsider. This is not to claim, as some might feel, that my analysis is somehow more 'objective' or 'true' than an insider's account; nor is it somehow more comprehensive and revealing. This does not negate, however, my ability as an outside researcher to draw interesting conclusions. For if 'every view is a view from somewhere' (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141), it is necessarily subjective and as valid as any other viewpoint. I would agree to this regarding informants. But do you really mean that all scholarly viewpoints/results (since they will to some extent always be subjective) are equally valid? I would focus – rather – on the merits that exists in the anthropological position: being trained in a particular scholarly field, doing a systematic study – you may be able to see things that “insiders” may not see as easily – something in that direction) As a researcher and a writer, I am making a choice about what to include and thus what to exclude. Abu-Lughod's 'narratives of the particular' points out that 'others live as we perceive ourselves living' (1991:158). Perhaps this can work as a bridge between two worlds?!

So the question still stands as to how we as outsiders comprehend, process and interpret such knowledge. Emerson and others argue that community members are not pristine objects that are simply 'discovered', but rather 'these meanings are interpretive constructions assembled and conveyed by the ethnographer' (Emerson, 1995: 108). The main pitfalls ethnographers encounter when in the field - and reconstructing it afterwards - include the imposition of outside categories used to describe social scenes and actions and the representation of native terms by static taxonomies (Emerson 1995). These pitfalls are especially visible when we research topics which are widely circulated and which have gained recognition as inherently good or beneficial in the western society, such as education.

When researchers go into the field, different identities are adopted according to the context and encounters. Many factors like gender, ethnicity, socio-cultural and religious identities are being negotiated. As a student for the University of Tromsø, Norway, I am obliged to abide by university research regulations; it is also mandatory in Norway to get permission from NSD (Norwegian Social Science Data Service) and to work within their guidelines. It is good practice to acknowledge who I am, where I have come from, and how my research ideas have been informed by previous study – this is the 'baggage' I bring to my research. I am aware that my research fits within

an 'etic' viewpoint, providing an explanation as an outsider, rather than an 'emic' or insider take on life (Bernard, 2000). Yet my viewpoint is still mixed, for I am studying in Norway whilst having been brought up and educated largely in Britain.

My role as a 'participant observer'

Having little experience of fieldwork, I was quite unsure how it would all go, but I did learn on the job and felt that my interviews got better and better. I also became more selective in my note taking. I was terrified when I arrived at my site, but I quickly became comfortable and overcame the obstacles. I still have much to learn and there were some disasters, such as when my video recorder ran out of memory unexpectedly. It was hard to stay on track because I was given so much information about the residential school and the difficult past, all of which was interesting, but it also sparked a number of tangents to my main focus.

I have had a wonderful experience that has proved to be a huge learning curve for me as a person and an academic; it has inspired me in my research on indigenous studies. I feel I have made positive connections with people, engaged in very fruitful discussions about tourism, and thanks to living off the site as well as on it, gained a greater variety of perspectives of people than I might have anticipated – from those actively involved to simple observers. I have certainly established a useful network of contact for future work.

I have benefitted from reading about fieldwork and data collection, particularly work on the post-colonial research paradigm noted by Chilisa (2012). I think this sensitized me to being aware about my role as a participant researcher. I have tried to avoid creating a value hierarchy (Merriam, et al, 2007) and also maintain an awareness of the influences of Western and non-Western frameworks at play (Gadamer, 1980). However, as Smith (2012) suggests, the indigenous should always be placed at the centre, and this has been and continues to be the main point of reference in the process of analysing data. I have tried to triangulate my findings relating to the perceptions of hosts, different guests, and organisers, both through any literature produced and through interviews. I hope that I have been a 'responsible researcher', accountable, respectful, conscious of rights and regulations in the research process.

(Chilisa, 2012:22) I am very grateful that I encountered people who were very kind, friendly and interested in taking part in my project; this has obviously helped immensely.

Chapter 3: The question of ‘authenticity’

“You’ve told us we don’t have a culture, so what are you worried about?”

This quotation from a native guide on a heritage site in British Columbia, Canada captures the ambivalence with which some locals view the concerns of some in authority regarding ‘authenticity’. This chapter aims to discuss these concerns, placing them in the context of regional accreditation schemes, policies for tourism, views held by site managers, guides and tourists themselves - setting all within wider theoretical frameworks established by scholars in this field. The bulk of the evidence will be drawn from literature produced by the relevant accreditation agency, ‘The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia’ (AtBC), literature produced for one site, and interviews conducted on fieldwork with managers, guides and tourists at that site. My main aim is to show how concerns over authenticity are played out in this field, who is concerned and for what reasons? What is meant by authenticity? How is this term ‘negotiated’ and understood by the people involved? While there are many points to be made about ‘authenticity’, I tend to agree with James Clifford that this whole issue is perhaps best captured by reference to ‘articulation theory’ (Clifford, 2004), and locals and tourists alike value the ‘authenticity of the experience’ rather than some imagined ‘authenticity of the site’.

Regulation and accreditation

As ‘indigenous tourism’ has developed and become big business, so it has attracted the interest of government agencies and self-regulatory organisations anxious to protect and regulate what occurs to ensure ‘high standards’ and the presentation of responsible images of the past. This in turn has obviously helped to promote some sites; hence it works for all concerned. ‘The Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia’ (AtBC) was founded in 1996 as a ‘non-profit, stakeholder-based organisation that is committed to growing and promoting a sustainable, culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry in British Columbia Canada’ (<http://www.Aboriginalbc>

.com/corporate/). It is claimed that the Aboriginal tourism industry now accounts for around 3.8 million visitors opportunities and an ambitious ‘Five Year Plan for 2012-17’ has projected that an industry that has already grown in value from \$20 million in 2006, \$42 million in 2011, will reach \$68 million by 2017 (*Ibid*)

AtBC produced an ‘Authentic Experiences Program’ in 2010, designed to ‘heighten the awareness and understanding of respectful and appropriate Aboriginal cultural experiences’ (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/>). It also seeks to ‘increase the number of true, respectful Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences in BC’ (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/>). The organisation poses the direct question of ‘what is an Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism business?’ (*Ibid*). The reply given is that:

An authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism experience is majority Aboriginal owned or controlled, satisfies industry standards for market readiness and sector requirements, has high operating standards and sufficient cultural content that is culturally appropriate and recognised by the originators of that culture while providing an opportunity for visitors to interact with Aboriginal people during the cultural tourism experience. (*Ibid*)

In order to gain ‘accreditation’, and in addition to the requirement for Aboriginal ownership or control, an operator must thus satisfy AtBC in three areas: market or export-readiness, operating standards and cultural content. (*Ibid*)

In a briefing paper produced to support this program, prepared by Beverley O’Neil and Brian Payer, the value of ‘authenticity certification’ is stressed, along with the need for at least one year’s experience in the business, the possession of valid insurance, and minimum opening hours during the tourist season (May-October). Much of the document focuses on sound business practices, but an interesting section entitled ‘Aboriginalizing the Experience – Adding Cultural Activities’ provides a list of what a site should aim to provide. This includes hosting events like a ‘powwow’, feasts, dances and storytelling, giving demonstrations of arts and crafts, guided tours, and all while wearing traditional apparel; guests should be offered traditional food and drink and given the opportunity to learn about language, culture and history. The aim is to get visitors ‘involved’ and allow them to ‘take home a bit of your culture’. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/>)

The word ‘authenticity’ is used quite frequently in this paperwork, interchangeably with the notion of ‘true and respectful’ and the setting of standards. It lays down a number of requirements that most sites should find easy to observe, which are at one and the same time, precise and ambiguous. The site that I visited, the X’atsull Heritage Village, has sought and gained accreditation through AtBC. The organisation now boasts some 15 sites that have signed up to their code of practice. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/>)

An Industry Services Manager based at one of AtBC’s prime sites in Vancouver explained to me how ‘mystery shoppers’ were employed to visit sites and to check adherence to the claims made in any literature on what was provided for tourists. She spoke of how AtBC worked closely with sites to assist them in meeting the entry requirements, and claimed that AtBC is at the forefront of these developments in setting standards for the ‘industry’:

Through training, information resources, networking opportunities and co-operative marketing programs, AtBC is a one-stop resource for Aboriginal entrepreneurs and communities in British Columbia who are operating or looking to start a tourism business. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/>)

There is much to commend in the work of AtBC: it is a professional body representing its members, it has clearly developed well since its origins in 1996, and it has gained the ear of government agencies regionally and nationally. It is doing its part to set high standards and attempting to do so in an ethical, socially responsible fashion. There are, however, questions to be asked as to how far its regulatory framework really answers concerns about what is meant by ‘authenticity’, if by this we mean ways of guaranteeing some ‘genuine’ experience and in the ways that it satisfies the needs of producers and tourists alike. (*Ibid*)

It is interesting to look at the process of certification from the point of view of the sites. The X’atsull Heritage Village site where my fieldwork was carried out has obtained their certificate that is proudly displayed in the office. The Manager informed me that:

All our recent awards recognize our Cultural Events in particular. They provide Soda Creek community, Williams Lake and local residents as well as visitors from around the world with the opportunity to get together, share a

cultural day and enjoy our beautiful setting by the Fraser River. The events play a big role in making our site better known overall.

She was equally proud of the fact that awards are only given where sites have strong support from their local community. Several of the guides, however were a little more ambivalent about the process of certification. One noted wryly that he “was proud to receive that award and to go to the ceremony”, but added that “there were mainly white people there” and “I think there’s something wrong with that”. This comment perhaps exposes the ambivalence of indigenous peoples who are happy to receive awards for their work, yet appreciate that it is somehow both patronising and strange in accepting the labels of others. Who is here declaring what is ‘authentic’?

Negotiated meanings

The approach discussed above has led scholars to problematize ‘tourism’ of one culture viewing another, seeing it as tainted by the commercialism of the exercise. To avoid such concerns, strong measures and sensible regulation need to be in place to ensure a ‘satisfactory’ experience, regardless of the problem of ‘authenticity’. In this regard, some of the AtBC regulations, such as those regarding ownership of sites might help, and certainly try to ensure that profits go to the people in most need. My site was under total native control and I felt this did make a difference, chiefly in the manner in which the guides interpreted what they did with visitors, and in turn the AtBC guidelines.

One problem with the concept of ‘authenticity’ is that it often presumes a fixed, static ‘golden age’, some pure ‘essence’. What this fails to acknowledge is that societies are always in the process of change and transformation, ‘there are no originals’ as pointed out by (Bruner, 1994) The indigenous peoples who present elements of their culture for visitors have every right to do so in a fashion that they feel is relevant to the present day. One guide expressed how he works as:

It is different with every group. It's never the same. What I share with one group is different from another; with me, nothing is ever the same. It's something that just happens, whatever comes in the moment, it is not up to me; it's whatever comes.

As another guide put it simply: "it depends on what tourists want I guess." In my interviews, visitors too seemed to appreciate this sense of a mediated experience that was contemporary as well as having reference to the past. As one put it:

Authenticity – it's the experience. I am here, I made a fire, made food in the fire, [and] the taste is different. That is my experience. It is not for someone else to decide.

The key for many of the guides seems to lie in just being themselves - an obvious definition of 'authenticity' really. They seem to enjoy talking about "what we already know, something we were taught from elders", the crafts they have learned from their parents.

The site manager, guides and visitors also agreed on another aspect of what is going on in these visits, namely - a valuable cultural exchange. The site manager noted that "everyone that comes here does so for a reason, to share culture/heritage; I'll tell you mine if you tell me yours." For one of the guides, it was:

... a real learning experience working here. You meet people from all over the world and you share stories. It has made me stronger and less ashamed of my past, knowing others have experienced such terrors.

For one guest, "this is a great place to hear about heritage, all of it – it is important and good to share and learn." Another guest stressed 'insights' gained from the experience:

I've got a huge insight from being here: the tepees, the roundhouse, sweat lodge, etc., and just the history that is here. So much insight, and to learn the aboriginal people here are still learning. And instead of just them learning, everybody is learning. We are all on this land and there shouldn't be that separation, together on all sides. This site in particular has a lot of stuff, a lot of insights.

Here again the 'authenticity' seems to lie in the experience rather than any particular 'truth' about the site or the stories told.

This is important because there are many ways in which the X'atsull Village Heritage site has 'historical flaws'. They erect tepees for their visitors even though tepees were not part of the Secwepemc communities found in that region; they illustrate a mode of living more common to indigenous peoples elsewhere. While such 'original' accommodation is provided, they often sit cheek by jowl with modern facilities like washrooms and showers. This is what Theobald has noted as the inevitable compromised entailed in tourism and labelled as 'the commoditization of culture for economic gains' (Theobald, 1998). It is common sense, and clear from the marketing literature produced by AtBC and others, that 'authenticity' is a brand – or guarantee - that does attract many tourists. Yet my fieldwork suggests that this is not only being interpreted in terms of some 'genuine', historically verified experience that might be documented in the manner that AtBC suggests. What AtBC does perhaps attempt to guarantee is that site hosts will be genuine/authentic in their endeavours to offer a 'respectful' experience, one that values a plurality of views about culture and seeks to promote dialogue to the benefit of all present at such sites.

Definitions of 'authenticity'

It has been well said that 'there are as many definitions of authenticity as there are those who write about it' (Taylor, 2001:8). But as Taylor continued:

This however, should come as no surprise, especially upon consideration of the persuasive force that the notion of authenticity wields in western ideological discourse, and the many users to which it may be put therein. Authenticity has become the philosopher's stone for an industry that generally seeks to procure other people 'realities'. In tourism, authenticity poses as objectivism. It holds the special power both of distance and of 'truth.' These are vital components in the production of touristic value. Fundamental to the authenticity concept is a dialectic between object as subject, there and here, then and now. (Taylor, 2001: 8)

Tourists therefore all have different ideas of what constitutes authenticity, based on their own ideas and perceptions of reality. Some commentators put less faith in tourists than others, hence Macintosh has noted that although tourists may express 'an interest in informal contact with aboriginal hosts and deeper involvement in their

ethnic experience, this must be taken with a grain of salt, for tourist experiences tend to be of brief and rather superficial in nature' (Macintosh, 2004: 12). For Johnston, author of *Is the Sacred for Sale* (2007), 'the ecotourism industry creeps into the deepest recesses of culture and community life and violates the full spectrum of indigenous rights culture and spirituality.' (Johnston, 2007 in Grimwood, 2009)

Many are now writing about how 'tourism' is invading more and more cultures:

The tourists' thirst for pristine environments and cultures has driven the tourism industry to explore opportunities beyond the borders of easily accessible areas. Yet with the stranger's gaze invading the space of indigenous inhabitants comes the potential for a myriad of cultural impacts from acculturation to commodification, exploitation to loss of identity. (Kutzner, Wright, Stark, 2009:1).

The language of 'invasion' is telling here for this suggests dangers in cultural tourism that are about more than simply being misled. Fortunately, my fieldwork revealed none of these fears, only the search for genuine encounters between visitors and hosts. As one guest put it: 'I've been allowed to be here, recognised by the people. Not many people get that chance.'" As another put it: "I don't feel like a stranger, I feel familiar; I don't feel like a guest."

For Cohen (1988) 'authenticity' is a modern value, the 'search for the real thing'. He argues that it is a 'socially constructed concept' the meaning of which is not given but negotiable to the subject' Many academics, most notably MacCannell (1973) talk of a 'staged authenticity' when a community takes something and recreates it into something 'traditional' for the purpose of tourism. The hosts understand the desire of tourists to see something 'real' and so oblige in creating this space. MacCannell (1999) presents 'the tourist' as being on a pilgrimage, searching for 'authenticity.' He argues that this search is 'endless, futile and damned to inauthenticity". Urry (1990) argues that tourists are aware that it is not really possible to have an authentic experience but simply go along with it, enjoying the experience as if it were. Feifer (1985) claims it has to do with 'play', that we all enjoy playing roles in society, and when on holiday people enjoy playing 'The Tourist' as well as being treated as such. All parties are aware that the space is 'staged' but enjoy it nonetheless. Greenwood (1982) argues 'all viable cultures are in the process of 'making themselves up' all the time, and mass tourism succeeds because tourists accept a loose interpretation of

authenticity, being satisfied with play and make believe' (Theobald, 1998). Its talked as if any slight change of behaviour is characterised as staged then surely to fit the criteria of being authentic tourists must then remain fixed and unchanged.

'Authenticity' is not 'objective' or 'real'; one key reason for this is that nothing is static and cultures are in a constant change, so there is not absolute point of reference. (Wang 1999) Heritage, tradition, customs and cultures are arguably all fabricated over time. Urry (2002: 9) asks if there is a difference between 'an apparently inauthentic staging for the tourist' and the process of cultural remaking that happens in all cultures anyway.

In western thought there is a conceptual difference between tradition and modernity. Often indigenous people perpetuate an image where the modern has no place. Tourism helps to perpetuate these disparities. The reproduction lays in the on going discourse of 'the other' in western thought – the opposite of modern. In tourism, this is attributed to cultural features like ecological awareness, peacefulness and spirituality, something presumably rarely found in the modern. As Wang puts it 'Exoticism is thus an idealization of 'others' and 'savages' in terms of the loss of authenticity, simplicity and innocence in the home society.' (Wang, 2000:139) Furthermore, 'the sensation of the exotic is, however, more often derived from exotic customs, cultures and peoples, particular when they are remote in both time and space' (Wang, 2000:145).

The authentic image/ marketing

If 'authenticity' is used to sell sites, one legitimate area of concern, apart from what actually happens on sites, probably lies with the 'images' used to promote them. And here there might be cause for concern. While AtBC offers guidelines on how sites should be promoted, offering work by reputable photographers and marketing personnel, the leaflets produced are currently rather staid. Each brochure has a rather simple portrait picture of a first nations person with the heading 'our story, your experience'. Each brochure emphasizes the nature of the different cultures along with stories that go with it. Many mention an 'authentic', tranquil experience and speak of

pristine environments and ancient cultures. The pictures are a mix of landscape, nature and people: these are not over exotic or exaggerated for tourists.

Researchers in BC and across Canada are looking into Aboriginal Tourism, most notably on how to develop tourist sites and the characteristics of the Aboriginal tourism traveller. Studies consistently comment that such a traveller is interested in nature, culture, exploration and outdoor activities; such travellers tend to be mature, wealthy and well educated. Partly to ensure ‘best-fit’ in the creation of tourist experiences, it is generally agreed that more research into traveller preferences and motivations, regarding aboriginal tourism products is necessary (Kutzer et al, 2009: 100). In creating the tourist profile to date, it has been acknowledged that tourists wish to see nature ‘undisturbed’, learn new things, and encounter other people of different age groups as well as ways of life; this has given a stimulus to training younger generations to become tour guides.

One area for more research in this project lies with the creation of marketing literature. More needs to be found out about how pictures and text are commissioned, what guidelines AtBC offers in practice, and how different sites are working on common and divergent policies. This was not an area that came up in the interviews I conducted on fieldwork, hence most of my evidence to date lies with email enquiries and analysis of what limited literature is already available. The representation of indigenous peoples in tourism brochures is curious: how and who decides what is the best way to represent a culture or peoples? Pictures chosen are often those that perpetuate ‘traditional’ images. Indigenous peoples are linked to notions of peacefulness, spirituality, living in harmony with nature – essentially the ‘noble savage’. These images contribute to the representations that inform tourists about where to travel. For the groups that are struggling for recognition of their rights, these images can work as both an opportunity and as a cage. For to claim to be indigenous one is setting oneself apart from the modern, which in the dominant discourse is often reduced to a matter of development. The spaces made for indigenous peoples often deny full assessment of all parts of their culture; tourist features only are emphasised.

In tourism research, representations are understood to be tangible and intangible forms of culture: rituals, songs, dance, and stories on the one hand and souvenirs on the other (Niezen, 2009). The authenticity of these representations is determined by

ownership (Prideaux, 2003). They are also a means by which the intrinsic value of such is transformed into products with a commercial exchange value. But who decides about this value? When representations are appropriated through unequal power dynamics they have the potential to distort cultural autonomy and identity. Repurposing culture for non-indigenous interests, like that of the government or for profit, is still occurring, but through education and awareness, indigenous culture is becoming increasingly self-generated. Representations of indigenous culture for tourism are often seen from a modern managerial perspective, seeing performance as a business. This focuses on the experience for the spectator at the expense of an original indigenous culture. This approach is synonymous with 'otherness', arguing that this form of culture is incompatible with original culture and thus has a negative effect on it; it is seen as being exploitative and even silencing and obliterating. This deception might influence the performers who are 'forced to act in ways they never quite were.' (Hunter, 2014) Yet these arguments overlook the question of how performers feel about their own roles and the performances themselves (Hollinshead, 2009; 532). It is possible to see cultural performances playing an important part in regeneration and self-determination (Grim, 1996). When 'cultural tourism' is owned or operated by indigenous people themselves it can work differently for all concerned (Zeppel, 2002 in Hunter, 2014). Performing culture can boost community morale and cultural self-awareness (Markwick, 2001, in Hunter, 2014). These findings accord well with what I found in my fieldwork; this is explored in later chapters and the conclusion.

This discussion of 'authenticity' has exposed a number of different understandings of the term/concept. It has also revealed how use of the idea is often 'fudged' and ambiguous. Certainly, many of the guides I encountered were confused – as the quotation at the start of this paper reveals. As one guide noted:

First you say we know nothing, and then you come and pay to hear what we have to say. I was stupid because of my skin, now people pay and suffer to have this colour. We are confused.

Yet there does not seem to be much confusion or real discord about the value of the experience of visiting such heritage sites. And these experiences are founded upon the authenticity of the encounters rather than the trappings of what occurs. It is freely acknowledged by all involved that what is occurring is being 'constructed' and 'co-

edited' by those present. The events add value to the hosts in their 'memory' of their ancestors and their culture; they offer appreciation and recognition. As Niezen (2009) has noted on a more general level:

The "accomplishments of ones ancestors" are significant, the work and culture of one's ancestors can be artistically and educationally cultivated in a process of a common remembrance and self definition and this process of collective remembrance and self definition can improves one's potential to act and to develop a sense of personal ability and worth (Niezen, 2009:150)

Again, this fits well with my fieldwork findings as several quotations have already revealed. Guides and guests alike all stressed the learning in which they had taken part. As one visitor commented:

If we look at History, there is so much we don't learn in schools. So people want to know; foreigners come here to see what is happening here – we want to know. If you learn from the past, it paves the way for the future; it is important we know about the past. In a way they were wiser then, but something has been lost in between, and that is what people get from this place; they get something, they learn something new.

This same person noted that this learning was brought about through shared encounters on site.

Cultural tourism can in this sense serve to 'increase visibility and the expression and reformulation of a peoples' history and identity in a public arena' (Taylor, 2000:281). The tourism I experienced seemed to be an empowering process that fostered the collective negotiation and definition of the Secwepemc peoples' identity. This fulfils Article 23 of the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which states that 'indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions'. Thus, the Schwepemc first nations are able to present their form of reality and in this way deliver a blow against the dominant hegemony. This collective process, characterised by replication of the past through performance, is an example of what Niezen (2009) calls 'therapeutic history'. He puts the emphasis on 're-emplacing' the aspects of the past that are emotionally positive. Many of the themes emphasised in this tourist site and others, are ones of peace, spirituality and harmony with nature. They are proud to share what they know.

When I asked the hosts what they thought about the site and about indigenous tourism in general, the response was “when people comment on tourism and say to us you shouldn’t sell your culture, I say to them “how can we sell a culture if we don’t have one, you have been telling us that for centuries”. Likewise another host, stated “when people tell us off for selling our culture, I think “ you said we have no culture so what are you worried about?” I think these responses are at the heart of the debate with authenticity. In the end perhaps it just comes down to more power play: who has the right to say what another culture should do with it and make outside claims as to its authenticity. The hosts at this site were proud to be sharing their culture. The fact they have turned elements into a commodity, does not in my opinion, diminish that. They have a culture and whilst it isn’t one from a storybook or a film, and whilst they may not be as connected to some parts of their heritage as their people once were this does not diminish what is here today.

Alternative ways of looking at ‘authenticity’

This discussion has emphasized the complexity of the debate about ‘authenticity’, but there is perhaps a more productive approach. It has been well noted that ‘tradition’ is often constructed in and through memories of struggles. Groups struggle with one another over the terms of their traditions and proper ritual protocol. As James Clifford says, “reconstructive activities of indigenous traditionalism are better than the demystifying discourse of invention” (Clifford, 2004, 158). In Clifford’s words ‘articulation, as I understand it, evokes a deeper sense of the political - productive processes of consensus: exclusion, alliance and antagonism that are inherent in the transformative life of all societies” (Clifford, 2001: 475). This process of truth claiming, ‘positioning one group or things as normative and authentic with others being wrong or inauthentic’ (Clifford, 2001, 248) has been called ‘articulation theory’. It has the virtue of widening the scope of cultural analysis so we can see cultural reproduction for what it is more clearly. By resisting the authenticity debate, an analytical site remains where we can listen to a wide range of articulations that are being expressed through these cultural vessels.

In articulation theory the matter of authenticity is secondary. It is accepted that cultural forms will always be made, unmade and remade. ‘Communities can and do adjust themselves, drawing selectively from remembered pasts’ (Clifford, 2001, 478).

Clifford asserts that scholars often struggle with finding the right language to represent the complex realities of indigenous people today, without imposing the ‘reductive backward looking criteria of authenticity’ (Clifford, 2001). Scholars should be careful of the language they use, we should be wary of coming across too much as ‘cultural constructivists’. If we speak of all traditions as inventions, as little more than our interpretations of them, we risk dismissing their value, and we miss understanding the culture, which, through such remembered pasts is being expressed, such language again implies authenticity.

These discussions of ‘authenticity’ are not productive; they represent a blind alley. Articulation theory allows for the historical ruptures and accepts the routine of altering and crafting of identities seeing it simply as the ‘stuff of getting through another day’ (Johnson, 2007). When the emphasis is on the production, rather than the thing itself we can resist the discourse of authenticity. When dealing with traditions, scholars should strive for a methodology of remaining in conversation with the people they study, aiming to be ‘methodologically near and theoretically distant’. (*Ibid*) The ‘invention of tradition’ as an academic construct, inspired by the analysis of ideologies and practises that have sought to legitimise themselves as traditional and authentic. ‘Human beings invent their own realities – and are thus, to a greater or lesser degree inventors of culture (Wagner, 1975). The term ‘invention’ can be denigrating in commentary regarding indigenous traditions, a consequence that must be analysed (Linnekin, 1991: 446).

As Greg Johnson has warned, we should beware a ‘new wave of essentializations and romanticizations of native traditions’ (Johnson, 2007). He emphasises the need to concentrate on the ‘living present’, to apprehend processes in traditions, and to look for what objects, texts or rituals might stand for in specific contexts. We need not to be ‘straining to hear the one “true voice” of tradition but instead must be attuned to a cacophony of voices’ (Johnson, 2007:160). Most important for my argument, ‘when the “true voice” of tradition is abandoned as the subject of analysis so too must quests for authenticity also be abandoned’ (Johnson, 2007:160). The struggle is about recognising that tradition is a process.

In conclusion, tourists, hosts and ethnographers, myself included, have all struggled with the limitations that come with a self-contained notion of culture and with that

have fallen for ‘the trap of authenticity’. (Theodossopoulos, 2013) But through the acknowledgement of its complexities, recognising that there are many ideas of authenticity, that identity is being negotiated and redefined at this present time. The acknowledgment of these parallel visions inspires new practises and the vitality and dynamism of contemporary indigenous cultures (*Ibid*). What is important to remember is that commodification does not result in the death of culture or something ‘true’. Instead we must see these ‘developments’ as inventiveness and adaptive of living traditions (Sahlins, 1999). Time gives its own ‘flavour’ to authenticity; transformations that are transformations of previous transformations. (*Ibid*) In all cultures, what was once ‘new’ can become ‘traditional’ and representative (Gow, 2001). Kane uses the expression ‘authentic discontinuities’ to refer to social change; use of this expression can help us see and appreciate the changes enabled in meaningful cultural practices.

Chapter 4: The Quest for 'Spirituality'

“ We don't need it to be kept secret, we just need it to be sacred”

One of the most sensitive aspects of cultural tourism surrounds notions of spirituality or religious experience. Many western travelers are intrigued by what they see as a particular connection with nature/spirituality enjoyed by indigenous peoples. Tourist sites are encouraged to provide access to ceremonies and rituals with spiritual connotations as part of their appeal. It is not always clear what is happening here, namely how far visitors come with preconceptions, and to what extent the sites permit or allow for this interaction, and with it the potential invasion of privacy.

This chapter will examine what occurs in practice at the X'atsull Heritage Village, focusing particularly on the compromises and mediated exchanges that occur. Usually, the hosts provide a framework, or a glimpse into their 'spirituality', with some explanation as to what it means to them. This allows for a variety of 'experiences' in which those who come with strong preconceptions and an interest in spirituality are likely to gain some of what they seek, while others may remain as interested observers. Compromises abound here and there are no guarantees.

The quotation above is from a native guest at the heritage site made in response to a question concerning the sharing of the sacred ritual of the 'sweat lodge' in tourism. This issue has been much debated amongst members of the first nations on the ground, and in academic circles across the world; needless to say, opinions vary widely. This chapter aims to discuss why spirituality is so important in tourism, how it is dealt with on site, and the views of those concerned, especially the indigenous peoples. It will follow the plan of the previous chapter by looking first at literature produced by sites and regions, then the views of managers, before turning to the opinions of guides and tourists, and concluding with reference to general theories on this topic.

Official views

In their paper on the ‘Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Authenticity Program’ prepared for AtBC, Beverley O’Neil and Brian Payer were suitably ambiguous on the sensitive matter of ‘spirituality’. They encourage sites to:

Host cultural events – powwow, feast, dance performances, dinner theatres, storytelling – that allow guests to taste and smell traditional foods, see dance and apparel and décor, hear and learn about the history and cultural values and beliefs, invite visitors to dance or drum or sing, and feel the spirit of celebration. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com>)

Stress is placed on the need to protect, respect and sustain local cultures; likewise, sites are encouraged to gain permission for their activities from their leaders. The Shuswap themselves have created a community handbook that sets out some guidelines in the interests of ensuring positive cross-cultural interaction. One guideline cautions teachers not to present intangible elements of culture in isolation. This echoes the thoughts of academics that ‘the presentation of legends, for example, in isolation of the purpose may trivialize the importance of the beliefs and values that were inherent in the stories’ (Jack, et al, 1993).

The X’atsull Heritage Village

The local literature – where it has anything to say on this delicate matter – thus emphasizes the need for permission, respect and proper, suitable awareness. The X’atsull Heritage Village does offer access to a ‘sweat lodge’ and the site manager commented that:

The Heritage Village has always been a spiritual place. People arrive from far away and comment on how the place is very spiritual and special. There are always some boundaries, some ceremonies will be explained, for example as part of the guided tour, but not necessarily shown. How are the boundaries decided upon? It always goes to the community and the elders.

The X’atsull site website notes that:

The sweathouse represents Mother Earth. It is the oldest and one of the first ceremonies the Creator handed to X'atsull First Nations People. The sweathouse is a cleansing of the body, mind and spirit. There are four rounds, each represent the four nations or four directions: red, yellow, black, white. (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>)

On the first round you say thank you to the Creator, on the second, thanks for women, on the third, thanks for men and those that cannot pray for themselves, and on the fourth and final round, we are encouraged to pray for ourselves. There are some interesting implications for gender here, although it is ambiguous. Needless to say, the X'atsull Village website exhorts all visitors to 'experience this traditional ceremony at X'atsull Heritage Village on the banks of the Fraser River.' (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>)

The sweat lodge itself is a round, domed structure usually made with flexible willow branches. It is covered with blankets and canvas; in the centre is a shallow pit for lava stones. These are heated in a fire and brought into the lodge by the helper or fire keeper. (*Ibid*) "Just like a person going to church" it is claimed, "there is lots of different stuff to do, put stuff together and pray, so you don't get hurt." Another illuminating comparison was made with a sauna in which "people are trying to find what they are looking for."

It is claimed, "there is no wrong way to do it, just invite the ancestors in and they will come – it is good for you." Yet there are some ceremonial rules involved:

We go in through the left and circulate, which represents the rotation of the earth. The steam represents the prayers, the inviting in of the ancestors and spirits, helping us in whatever we are trying to do; the steam also carries the eagles to the mountains.

The crucial point here is that this is a ceremony that can be both observed/discussed and also taken part in, after discussion and agreement with the community leaders. No payment is expected, if ones request is granted. As one guide said:

There is a big debate about whether to share it; the decision is entirely up to the elders and based on who asks and for what reasons. It is not a paid part of the tourism, but instead based on a request that either will or won't be granted. It is quite infrequent.

What seems to have occurred here is the development of an understanding with certain visitors – a way of ascertaining those who come with genuine spiritual intent and respect? As one guide expressed it: “if people hadn't shared their culture with me then I feel I wouldn't have one; and also, we need to trust white people again.” It seems to be actually quite rare for visitors to ask to participate; they are mostly content to hear about it and respect the fact that the ritual is performed seldom and with due reverence. This is what I observed and it was confirmed in conversation with the guides. I should make it clear at this stage that I did not participate in this ritual.

My evidence as a 'participant observer' and the views of other visitors

Before arriving at this site, I was full of expectations and images of the kinds of spiritual practices that might be on offer. This was partly influenced by what I had read and partly down to previous experiences of this type of tourism with different communities across the world. I had anticipated that the site would offer more explicit religious acts and rituals, especially given what I had read of the sweat lodge. This was not the case, as has been noted above. 'Spirituality' was however frequently a matter of discussion at the site. Visitors often commented on the peace and tranquillity they felt there; others more directly commented on the connection they felt to the spirits and ancestors that they either felt or saw. One guest explained to me that he thought that “for many tourists this isn't about spirituality, just learning, but for those that it is, it is a very powerful place.”

This sums up well what I saw around me: for those who came seeking spirituality, it was indeed a wonderful site, but for many, they were happy just to appreciate the beauty and serenity of our surroundings, while others were also happy to soak up what they learned about the culture. Discussions with the guides could be fruitful, however, in changing perceptions and encouraging visitors to see more about themselves and the site. After a couple of hours of being on site, just absorbing my

surroundings, I met and began talking with an elder who had been working at the site for 30 years. We had a long conversation about who we were and how we had both come to be here. When I asked about the site's connection to spirits, the elder pointed to a tree not too far away, and said "over there you can often see and hear the spirits, playing drums and singing, I don't know what it means, perhaps it means they are happy with what we are doing here." He said that there had been many sightings of spirits, hearing music, even by non-native tourists. He said:

When people commented that we shouldn't start this place, talking about it amongst the elders, we told them our elders are here, they are singing and wanting people to hear and learn... we are still trying to figure out their message.

On one of the days I spent at the site, I met a woman guest who considered herself to be very spiritual. After getting to know each other a little, we decided to come back one night to sleep there in the tepees. I shared the tepee with the woman and her partner. We brought some food for the fire that we cooked and ate. We spent most of the night sitting out under the stars talking and sharing ideas. The woman set up her crystals in the tepee to protect us through the night. The couple considered themselves very spiritual and spoke a lot about their previous experiences along with what they could feel and experience there and then. At different times throughout the night they commented on what spirits they could see and feel. I remember walking into a pit house and the woman gasped, for as she told us later, she saw a spirit lady crying there. Now clearly I have no way of verifying this experience, and I was only a witness to events that transpired that evening, not a participant in any full sense, but there is no denying the effect it had on my fellow guests.

On another occasion I was invited by a guest to join in making an offering to the spirits. This involved saying a prayer and scattering, as if they were ashes, tobacco into the wind. The tobacco was said to be something the spirits can still enjoy in the 'other' realm. On this occasion, when I was asked to participate, I did say a silent prayer while scattering some tobacco to the wind. In this manner, I suspect, many tourists may be drawn in a little further than they might have expected into participation in some of the minor rites of the site.

I encountered a family from Germany visiting the site. The mother of this family spoke with the elder for a long time. She was a social worker and they spent a long

time swapping stories of pain and struggle. The elder commented several times about how he felt comforted by such stories, feeling that he and his 'people' are not the only ones to suffer in life. Towards the end of their visit, the lady said that God had told her, to give a CD that she had prepared, discussing some of the issues they had talked about, to a native person on your travels, when and to whom it feels right to give it too; she chose to give it to this elder and he was very touched. It somehow cemented their discussions.

In all my encounters on the X'atsull Heritage Village, and later, when I visited the Annual Squamish Nation North Vancouver Powwow, I met with a warm welcome from my hosts and fellow visitors, participated in dances and singing, and always felt that we did so with proper respect and care. When thanks were addressed to spirits and ancestors, and songs sung as part of a ritual, we were always politely requested not to talk or take photographs; and this request was invariably complied with completely.

Theoretical constructs that help to explain the search for 'spirituality'

Tourism has long been linked to ideas of pilgrimage. Scholars have remarked on a number of similarities: both can involve the pursuit of healing, there is often an element of thanksgiving in the journey, and there is what Victor Turner calls 'a rite of passage' for some when they seek a sense of being 'away' in a sacred place. As Turner writes: 'a tourist is half a pilgrim, if the pilgrim is half a tourist. Pilgrimage invites tourism while tourism entertains the possibility of pilgrimage experiences' (Compo, 1998). 'Even when people bury themselves in anonymous crowds on beaches, they are seeking an almost sacred, often symbolic, mode of 'communitas', generally unavailable to them in the structured life of the office, the shop floor, or the mine'. (Turner & Turner, 1978: 20) Graburn argues similarly with his notion of 'two lives', that rites of entry and re-entry demarcate the transition between these two lives. 'We are a new person who has gone through recreation, and if we do not feel renewed, the whole point of tourism has been missed' (Graburn, 2001: 27). For Graburn a basic motivation for tourism lies in the need for 'recreation' in many senses of the word (Graburn, 1989: 36). For the tourist, Graburn posits 'that it is the best kind of life: it is sacred in the sense of being exciting, renewing and inherently self-

fulfilling' (Graburn, 1989: 282). Tourism is actually a substitute for many for religion and festivals.

Much like 'authenticity', the term 'spirituality' is used as a catchword within tourism. Many tourists are looking for a 'spiritual experience' and thus sites are hoping to provide just that. The X'atsull Heritage Village website exhorts visitors to:

Experience physical and spiritual rejuvenation by reconnecting with Mother Earth.' The site emphasises the scenery with the 'majestic Frazer River' and the 'unspoiled environment of abundant, unique wildlife. (<http://xatsullheritagevillage.com>)

This is evoking a broad view of 'spirituality' – a connection with the environment - and some questioning of how visitors see themselves, or would like to see themselves. Everything is left to the eyes of the beholder.

This emphasis on the individual and on inner experience is thoroughly in keeping with an observed shift from concern with 'religion' as such, to an interest in 'spirituality'. Scholars like Heelas and Woodhead, in *The Spiritual Revolution*, talk of a 'massive subjective turn in modern culture'. (Heelas & Woodhead et al, 2005) They have noted that 'spirituality' is believed to offer an individual greater scope for his/her own interpretation, with less pigeonholing according to class or roles, as is often assumed to be the case with the world religions. This subjective life focuses on 'states of consciousness, mind, emotions, passions, sensations, experiences, dreams – including moral sentiments like compassion' (*Ibid*). There is an anti-institutional element here: people object to complying with given roles. 'The spiritual revolution is putting the mental back in touch with the body, relating intellectual abstractions to a broader context of culture, language, symbol, out of which the sense of self is found' (*Ibid*). I found many echoes of this way of thinking in my interviews with hosts, guides and guests at the X'atsull Heritage Village.

The rejection of the term 'religious' was common in my encounters. As one elder said:

I'm not religious, no, its just a word that you can't put anything you want on to, but now I would say I am spiritual, which I learnt just meant respect for everything.

I learned later that much of the condemnation of the term ‘religious’ – on the part of my hosts and guides – came understandably from the past experience and history of poor treatment at the hands of Christian missionaries, their forced education and participation in alien customs and rituals. But this perception was also shared by many of the visitors:

There is one God, call it what you like, it will still answer you. No one is telling me you have to do this or that, I don’t have to – I just have to say my prayers and say thank you. If everyone did the same, you wouldn’t need all these religions - just believe in what you think.

This massive subjective turn towards spirituality goes part way to explain the boom in cultural tourism and the preoccupation with indigenous peoples, their rituals and traditional knowledge. As one visitor told me;

I came looking for answers to questions. I believe First Nations People are more in tune with the spirit world. I found sitting in sweats, listening to grandfathers and mothers very interesting; when they talk to me, they don’t tell me lies; there is no reason to, everything they’ve said has all been true. I came here looking for answers and I’ve been given them; it can be very emotional when you let the spirit world be close to you - its pure love - and there’s no higher energy than pure love. I’ve been allowed to be here, recognised by the people; not many people get that chance.

This quotation is interesting for a number of reasons: it reveals a touching faith in the experience; it suggests some ‘romanticisation’ of the indigenous peoples; and some sense of being privileged and honoured by partaking in the tourist experience. It also denotes clearly that the tourist had come with high expectations of the experience and that these expectations were fulfilled. Interestingly, one host remarked that “I used to think only native people could connect with spirits, I struggled with that for a long time, but now I know its not true, that all people can connect.”

Some concerns about ‘spiritual tourism’

While there is much to applaud about the honesty and flexibility of site hosts, guides and tourists as they mediate their exchanges and remain open to experiences, there are also some concerns. Scholars have worried about the growing ‘commodification’ of

culture, even though some of these experiences have been reserved and not covered by payment. It has been claimed – in rather dramatic language to emphasise the point – that:

People of European heritage, out of hunger for what their culture lacks, may unwittingly become spiritual strip miners, damaging other cultures in superficial attempts to uncover their mystical treasures. Understanding the suppression and grounding ourselves in the surviving knowledge of the European traditions can help people with European ancestors avoid flocking to the sad tribe of Wannabes, – want to be Indians, want to be Africans, want to be anything but what we are, and, of course, any real spiritual power we gain from any tradition carries with it a responsibility. If we learn from African drum rhythms or the Lakota sweat lodge, we have incurred an obligation not to romanticize but to participate in the very real struggles being waged for liberation, land and cultural survival (Starhawk, 1989)

This rightly points out that cultural tourists who visit these sites have some moral obligation to pick up the cudgels on behalf of those they have visited, who are often still struggling against the forces of officialdom to gain their full rights. It was not always clear to me on the village that tourists necessarily picked up these political overtones in their search for a spiritual experience.

The New Age Movement is quite enthralled with indigenous peoples and what they are perceived to represent, namely spiritual people closely connected to the land, an image that is in contrast to the dystopian ideas of the ‘west’. (Waldren & Newton, 2012) This romanticized contrast can be damaging when indigenous peoples are placed in this image of the ‘other’, as an ‘image of what has been lost’. This romanticized image as Waldren and Newton argue, invariably depoliticises indigenous identities, and reconfigures them as legitimate only within the stereotyped construction of the dominant culture. Nevertheless, such views do not prevent indigenous peoples from sometimes using this literature to their own advantage.

Cultural identity is an important resource for indigenous peoples in their struggle to assert the rights and interests. According to (Young, 2000), indigenous peoples identity partly depends on ‘their right to their cultural and historical narrative to define who they are in relation to the dominant culture in which they operate’. Outsiders and businesses, along with new age movements that reinterpret and reinvent

their culture for their own benefit, therefore place themselves in competition with indigenous communities, whose sites could then become political battlegrounds for the ownership and representation of culture. Issues regarding representation and ownership are interwoven with the struggles they face to have their values and voices recognised. What Waldren & Newton (2012) are arguing is that through this cultural appropriation and misrepresentation, indigenous people risk being even more disenfranchised from their cultural contexts. When it comes to matters of the sacred, the significance lies not only in the symbolism, but also in the transmission of such symbols. The New Age Movement discusses sacred sites in a way that belong to all humanity. Some scholars have been very critical of this movement and talk of how these people have infiltrated the sacredness of indigenous culture for the purpose of desecration and control.

In his *Who Owns Native Culture*, (2004), however, Michael Brown argues that there are dangers in an over-zealous guarding of indigenous peoples. He argues that this position fails to acknowledge and problematize the reverse cultural borrowing among the world's indigenous peoples. What is revealed by the operation of the X'atsull Heritage Village site is that hosts, guides and tourists alike are all seeking answers to their own individual quests, and in the process, they are making and remaking their own cultural identities. They also acknowledge common problems in the world and have been drawn together by what one host described as faith that:

Mother Earth is going to cleanse. We can't go back to living traditionally, there's not enough stuff. I would keep a lot from what we have now, but some things need to be cleansed.

Perhaps one concern with 'cultural borrowing' lies in unequal power relations that exist in encounters with indigenous peoples. It would be unwise, however, to pigeonhole either group for being naive and without agency. From my experience, the focus was more on cultural exchange – an everyday part of all cultures. Moreover, for some tourists – and I include myself here – a certain 'romanticisation' can lead to genuine insights and greater understanding gained through cross-cultural encounters. I recall the interesting remark of one native host when he noted: "if it weren't for people sharing their culture with him, he feels he wouldn't have one." It is undeniable that power structures are at play in these encounters, yet if the exchanges are conducted with honesty and respect, they can be very fruitful.

The question of 'cultural appropriation'

Several scholars have pitched their concerns around the concept of 'cultural appropriation'. This occurs when 'members of one culture take the cultural practises of another as if they're their own, or as if the right of possession should not be questioned'. (Hart, 1997: 138) The interest in spirituality and the sacred is often achieved by the use of sacred traditions that come from indigenous cultures. These traditions, connections with nature and spirituality are often seen as missing from 'western' society; this idea again contributes to the romantic picture of indigenous peoples (Neuenfeldt, 1998: 74). Cultural appropriation is often legitimised through the idea that such knowledge is valuable for the planet as a whole and thus should not be kept a secret. (Brian 1994: 12) What is important in these debates is to acknowledge the power structures that have, and do, existed in these interactions. A lot of the knowledge we have about indigenous rituals and their representations comes from western scholars and New Age authors (Starhawk, 1989, Hollinshead, 1992 Nuenfeldt, 1998, Zeppel, 1998) They may have selected western interpretations of what is happening, and likewise have talked most about what they have found attractive in a culture; much has no doubt been ignored. Yet they often provide us – and current indigenous peoples – with what we know about past ceremonies and rituals. We are interlinked whether we like it or not.

When it comes to understanding ritual and sacred activities, context is vital in order to understand fully what is going on. There are tensions in the writings of those who at one and the same time write of indigenous peoples in terms of the 'noble savage' with ancient knowledge that might save the developed world, while they also trap those peoples in the position of existing for the benefit of west. (Handler & Saxton, 1998 Hendry, 2005) This is a hangover from the days of colonialism. This argument has a balance between 'cultural theft' and indigenous 'victims'. But the appropriation argument is at further risk for it fixes indigenous peoples again in a western understanding of indigeniety, which denies it own cultural growth and borrowing, and also ignores the individual agency of the individual indigenous person, and with that the individual agency of the new age spiritually inclined individual. We have basically all borrowed extensively from each other and will continue to do so.

In practice, therefore, cultural tourism and the development of sites at which indigenous peoples might showcase their culture, traditions - and spiritual customs should they so wish – has benefitted from the work of both local people on the ground and western academics. Certain ceremonies have been rescued from oblivion, rituals honed and developed admittedly, but with concern – as noted earlier – about some notion of ‘authenticity’. Groups of performers have gained work thanks to growing interest in this kind of tourism. Native pride has been enhanced. And the code of conduct of the AtBC has ensured that the rights of ownership of indigenous peoples in British Columbia at least have been guaranteed. The concerns noted above are real, but it is fair to say that they are not characteristic of what I encountered on the site, which was valued and appreciated for what it had to offer.

Conclusions

Just as the literature calls for people to show respect and care for what they encounter, so scholars should show care and due consideration for what goes on in practice. The strength of a study like this is that it seeks the opinions of those at the heritage sites: owners, hosts, guides and the tourists who visit. In the tradition of ethnographic studies, it seeks to give voice to those who are seldom heard, to hear them out and respect what they have to say. That includes accepting their practical definitions of big concepts like ‘authenticity’ and ‘spirituality’. This is not to deny problems, confusions and ambiguities, or tensions between aims and outcomes with regard to guide and visitor perceptions. Yet what has been striking in this discussion is how much unity there was between all concerned regarding what they sought and gained under the banner of ‘spirituality’. There was no miss-selling here. By and large, people seemed to gain what they came to gain. What is also apparent, however, is that there were many useful gains and insights, achieved almost unexpectedly for many guides and tourists alike, in the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred. Something about the site, the people involved, and the nature of events mounted, induced respect, provided calm, and stimulated interesting discussion. And there is no denying that for some, as one guest put it:

I am spiritually interested in the place and I’ve come here to connect. Although I haven’t been here before, in another sense I feel I have.....

Chapter 5: A Shared Encounter

If I can help in letting people know what it is we went through, to get to where we are now, and still be able to live... I guess that's the reason I keep staying here. (*Host who has worked on site for 30 years*)

This chapter aims to illustrate why tourism is important not only for the Secwepemc people working at the X'atsull Heritage Village, but also for the tourists who come to experience the heritage site. It is important not just because of its commercial, economic value to the country, but for the space and platform that it provides for real engagement and connection with others. It is possible to read literature about 'cultural tourism' that is overlaid with negative images, as for example, the idea that tourists take from or exploit those they visit, while the latter are forced to demean themselves for the sake of money. (MacCannell 1973, Johnston, 2007) These concerns can be seen in what has already been said about the search for 'authenticity' and 'spirituality'. This would be to miss, however, how much the hosts themselves - particularly those from indigenous peoples - have gained from this work. The X'atsull Heritage Village appears to have empowered those who work there, given them a valuable learning experience, and done much to counter their past marginalisation in wider society, thus promoting a new found self-confidence and respect for their own past. The quotation above highlights this pride in what is gained from encounters with visitors, what makes it all worthwhile?

Who benefits from 'cultural tourism' and how?

Tourism is a social activity in which relations between hosts and guests are central. 'Host and guest encounters generally take place in several different contexts: places and situations where tourists are purchasing goods and/or services from the host; places and situations that they are using or occupying at the same time; and places and situations in which they meet to share ideas' (Ratz, 2000). The last one may seem to be the least commonly explored in tourism research, but it is the one I wish to emphasize. During my time at the heritage village I asked both the hosts and guests why they had come to the site, what they had hoped to gain, and whether their visit

had been satisfactory. People from both perspectives spoke about how much they had learnt and emphasized the value of their communication with one another. They thus thoroughly endorsed the value of the encounter – for all concerned.

What comes through strongly in my research is that a sense of empowerment, pride, learning, recovery of a sense of past, the value of talking with others matters accrue from ‘cultural tourism’. This village has done much more than provide some employment, and this has enriched the lives of not only those working there, but also the region. The very process of establishing the village has helped the local community to rekindle a sense of identity. What is more, that pride has been supported by the very growth of tourist numbers, endorsing the feeling that people want to learn more about them. One host recalled with pride the words of a German couple that argued:

Why are you waiting for the government to help you? Look what you have here, start the village, look for people to come, people from Germany are willing to come.

He felt ill equipped, saying that:

I didn’t know anything about my culture; we had to start from the ground. I had to remember what my grandmother had shared with me. We have young people too that work here and they could share the same things, people started commenting what a wonderful job these young people were doing.

It all got going in 1991, since when “we are getting more respect for our culture; we lost it but we are finding it; this site is helping putting life back in, letting the people know what we are doing.”

Friedman (1994:132) argues that ‘self definition does not occur in a vacuum but in a world already defined’. This process of reclaiming and showcasing a culture can be very empowering, especially when they are operating within a given ‘hegemonic reality’. This process can give indigenous peoples the opportunity to reclaim some of that power, in being able to define for themselves who they are, and what they’re about. Friedman states that it is important for a community - especially one that has been marginalised - to separate themselves from the dominant culture and establish a self-centred autonomy (Friedman, 1994:132). This process may not only be

empowering, it can also be therapeutic. The process of self-identification through reclaiming the past is an example of what Niezen refers to as ‘therapeutic history’, which he argues again works as counter hegemonic, since it involves the ‘appropriation or sponsorship of narratives about the past as a way to define the moral essence of a people to recover from a lingering collective experience of rejection, dispossession and assimilation at the hands of the dominant society’ (Niezen, 2009:150). As one host at the site put it:

It’s a real learning experience working here: you meet people from all over the world and you share stories, it has made me stronger and less ashamed of my past knowing other have experienced other terrors.

It is interesting that so many conversations I witnessed on site rarely entailed the laments of one group of people only, but rather led to intriguing discussions of how many people had things in common regarding past hardships, conflicts, and social/cultural tensions. It became clear that visiting the site enabled many people to face aspects of their own past in relation to discussions of the indigenous peoples. On my part it helped that I could not only discuss my life in the west, but also my research on the Sámi people. My ability to discuss the situation of the Sami people opened up fresh insights about comparisons between the histories of indigenous peoples, gave me some extra credibility as a researcher, and proved to be an example of a westerner who was prepared to listen and learn.

The perspective of ‘therapeutic history’ emphasizes group affirmation and the way people feel about themselves as the main criterion for determining the ‘truth’ (Ibid). This emphasis on group affirmation can also be seen as an attempt to challenge the negative and stereotyped images that have been created by others and placed onto them. Through this therapeutic history, emplacing the aspects of the past that are emotionally positive, they showcase the parts of their culture and past that are deemed positive, for example, harmony with nature, their connection with spirits etc. Such stories from the past comprise an essence of collective being that can be nurtured and drawn from in times of need (Niezen, 2009: 150).

The process of selecting what they wish to ‘showcase’ about themselves is best done as a community and may help to strengthen identity. It corresponds with the hopes of Article 33 of the United Nations that: ‘indigenous peoples have the right to determine

their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions'. Tourism sites like these provide them with a space to define and play out their own reality. Claiming an identity may be a form of empowerment, a replication of the past through rituals, re-enactments, events etc. The X'atsull Heritage Village exemplifies what is entailed here, as one host explained:

The one thing see, is what the government has done to us, not really said anything about us as a whole - so we have to fill in those blanks on what happened, like why we are so behind in certain areas, that what needs to happen. Some people come here with an idea that because of what happened we need to change right now. We have to be able to see it, to change it; I'm stuck otherwise

The same host noted that:

Often people were stumped as to what to say about their culture. Like Moses in the desert, we wandered lost for 40 years or so; now we are finding our way back, the sixth/seventh generation - it's all in the youth.

A benefit of sharing spaces like that 'created' in tourism is that it can give indigenous people who have lost some of their traditions and culture the opportunity and a means for revival. Such sites can provide the wider community the opportunity to learn and play out elements of their culture. Through the sharing and interaction of people they can gain a greater understanding of contemporary indigenous live styles, and with this, indigenous peoples obtain agency.

I must have been 50 years old, I didn't know - that's what got me interested. I didn't know about our culture - how we lived before. The knowledge you didn't know you had, I think that's why I do it and continue to be here.

A younger host commented that "the sites are important; people learn how we live and lived years ago.'

These cross-cultural exchanges are important, and it is even more important that they are carried out on these sites where indigenous people act as the hosts. The breaking down of years of ignorance and prejudice can only be carried out effectively when the previously marginalised people – the 'victims' of the past – are placed in a new position of strength. In talking about the 'authenticity' involved here, Hadler and Saxon refer to 'experiential authenticity', re-enactments that give rise to 'magic moments' (Hadler & Saxton, 1998). The hosts are placed in the role of guardians of

their culture and past, and also of the need – shared with many of their visitors – to restore, protect and conserve the best of what has been ‘lost’ in the interests of all humanity. Indigenous peoples around the world have thus been given a new position of ‘trust’ in their communities as the guardians of older values and traditions. (Daniel, 1996: 782-3) It is vital to all that they continue and perpetuate this work. ‘Cultural tourism’ is not just about how we package the past, it is also about how we see the future. As one host expressed it:

This place, it’s important for everyone, keeping their identity, wherever you go, nations, people, they have an identity: they are true Canadian, they are keeping and remembering the past and learning their future. Canada will be one of leading countries: vast amenities, coal, gas, etc - its all here. But the nation’s people are saying, you can’t take all this; we want some of it left for our children.

Most of those concerned – hosts, guides and tourists of all descriptions – seem to have bought into this concern for the future.

What is for sale in these cultural transactions?

Whatever the theorising, at bottom it all comes down to what is for sale and what attracts the visitors? Goods, accommodation, tours and events all play their part in what occurs and makes a site successful. And critical questions concern how long do people stay, do they come again, and is business booming? The X’atsull Heritage Village is open between the summer months of May until October, typical for the tourist season in Canada, heavily dictated by the weather. The village offers guided tours, cultural days, accommodation in tepees, and experiences relating to the pit house, sweat house, the use of drying and tanning racks, and of course the wonderful location by the Frazer River. Many tours are pre-booked, but given appropriate numbers; some can be mounted on demand. It is not unusual for individuals or small groups to stop by, become engrossed and seek advice from a host. As has already been discussed, the sweat house ritual is not part of routine activities, although it is discussed. Inquisitive and sympathetic visitors are occasionally allowed to take part in ceremonies and rituals, but usually only after they have demonstrated their good faith and genuine interest. All are encouraged to learn about making a medicine pouch or working with beads. School groups often benefit from such workshops.

Although it is possible to stay at the site, this is actually quite a rare occurrence. I originally thought I would be based there, but given the point in the season and the dangers of being there alone; I took accommodation in a nearby town. I thus came to experience the site very much as other visitors on days when there were special events mounted. This pattern is relatively recent, for when the site was originally started it benefitted from lots of European, particularly German visitors, who wanted to stay in the tepees. There is a debate here about what to preserve about the integrity of the site, for the present ‘accommodation’ is rather rough and ‘natural’, not of the kind to attract modern tourists – it is for the hardy and foolhardy! It remains to be seen how the community may seek to develop the potential of the site with this regard.

Day events are popular, however, and pit cooking is demonstrated and experienced. This is where a hole is dug and lined with hot rocks, into which a stick is placed in the middle to act as a steam vent, and in which they place covered food, like salmon and potatoes, along with plants and herbs found on site – all of which is then cooked for several hours. Needless to say, these meals need to be booked in advance. Visitors are encouraged to take part and learn about this cooking process and charges for what is then offered vary. For most visitors, the typical experience may only last a few hours as they stop to take in the scenery, watch a few activities, and perhaps talk with the guides. An elder and one or two youths usually form the contingent of guides available each day.

The ‘cultural days’ held regularly each month are much grander occasions when many more hosts are present. I was fortunate to be there for one such occasion. The young people helped with the fires and food, demonstrated the crafts, while elders led with groups and explanations. The arts of fishing were demonstrated. These ‘cultural days’ often attracted large numbers of visitors of many different kinds, local people, other indigenous peoples and foreign tourists. Although such days were advertised, many visitors were simply lucky that so much was on when they dropped by. They encountered singing, playing of drums and people in traditional dress. At the moment, very little effort is made to make this heavily ‘commercial’: some artefacts are on display, various brochures are there for the taking, but there is no ‘gift shop’ on site nor any great attempt made to make lots of money.

I asked the manager what she thought drew visitors to the site and she replied:

A beautiful setting by the river; the opportunity to learn about local First Nations culture; taking part in cultural activities; being able to meet people from the local First Nation community.

As for what insights she thought it all provided, she felt that it worked well and that:

We are not about putting on a show specifically for visitors. You get to meet real people, learn about history of course, but also visitors have a chance to ask those every day questions that matter to them personally.

When I asked the manager why she thinks the site is successful she answered:

The Heritage Village is successful in many different ways: it provides a place to share and learn about culture. Many traditions are practiced and taught to you. It provides job opportunities – many of them are first jobs for our youth.

In answer to the same question, a ‘host’ who has worked at the site for thirty years replied:

One of the things I’ve found works so well is that European people are so closed in; we have more land and they say they can feel the spirits here, elders, the river, and after making noise, that’s what clears a person’s mind. That is why people come here: we have the space. People that come here have a sense that there is something here.

He elaborated with the simple wisdom that:

I think people are searching for answers to what is gonna happen; something is gonna happen, we all feel it or know it; we’re caught in what it is. I guess that’s the reason I keep staying here, it’s like what Thomas and Bettina [the German couple that helped to start the site] said, ‘if I can help in letting people know what it is we went through to get to where we are now, and still be able to live,’ I guess that’s the reason I keep staying here.

It has been well argued that:

Heritage sites are not simply found, nor do they simply exist, but rather they are constituted at one level by the management and conservation processes that occur at and around them, and at another level, by the acts of visiting and the engagements that people perform at them (Smith, 2006).

Smith continues in arguing that the performances that occur are ‘acts of remembrance and commemorations’ that are about negotiating, constructing and reconstructing a sense of place and belonging; furthermore, an understanding in and of the present.

(Smith, 2006) These ‘performances’ create cultural moments of meaning which Smith argues simultaneously validate the idea of heritage that frames and defines these performances and the moments they produce. People make sense of the present in these moments. In this sense the tourist becomes as much a maker of heritage as anyone/thing else (Smith 2006:214). The experiential, the agency, and creativity are what gives ‘heritage’ its presence in the contemporary world (Kuutma, 2009:10 in Smith, 2006). For Crouch ‘tourism is a practise of ontological knowledge, an encounter with space that is both social and incorporate, an embodied feeling of doing” (Crouch, 2002: 211).

The future of the X’atsull Heritage Village, and other such sites

If the development of the site has given empowerment and a renewed sense of pride to the indigenous people involved, the story is by no means at an end. And the future is fraught with difficult decisions: should more be done to develop commercially? What goods might be reasonably sold? What might be done about offering accommodation fitted for modern visitors while also maintaining the integrity of the site? How is it all going to be sustained when so much depends on the original founders and elders who are few in number? Does the future lie with increased numbers of educational visitors or with the lay public?

The reality is that there are both opportunities and threats when indigenous peoples choose to take part in tourism. The economy is often seen as the main motivation, although not necessarily by the hosts, but tourism is ‘one way to address the economic, social, and cultural challenges facing indigenous peoples’. (Zinder, 1969, UN, 1999) Economic independence is likely to result in more self-determination and cultural pride. Appropriately managed tourism is considered by scholars to be as a sustainable activity that is consistent with indigenous values, and economically speaking, indigenous peoples have an advantage owing to their unique cultures (Notzke, 2004). With the potential benefits this type of tourism can provide, it is important to work towards maximising the rewards. Both international and national organisations and bodies, like AtBC, for example, are there to help guide companies in the right direction. I don’t wish to suggest that there are a ‘magic’ set of guidelines that will ensure the equality and success, but I do hope that small sites like these,

which are done well, can serve to help and guide others and contribute to the diverse examples of indigenous tourism. As Hinch and Butler argue, ‘a symbiotic relationship is possible to the extent that cultural survival contributes to economic successes which contributes to cultural survival (Hinch & Butler, 2012)

It is clear that Aboriginal tourism is an important growing sector and many of those involved are working to ensure that it is a sustainable one. As it states on the AtBC website: ‘a sustainable Aboriginal tourism sector with diverse products in communities in every region of the province is recognized as one of the major focuses for achieving the target set by the Premier to double tourism revenues in B.C. by 2015.’ They hope to achieve this ‘through training, information resources, networking opportunities and co-operative marketing programs’. (<http://www.aboriginalbc.com>) I asked the manager, hosts and guests for their views on if and how this kind of tourism might grow. The manager was adamant that it would because it was popular – “it is the fastest growing sector of tourism”. She was clear that the way forward was to “build on current programs and activities. Provide year round and seasonal job opportunities. Increase revenues and visitation.” One host replied: “I guess one of my biggest hopes is that young people are now starting to do something here. That’s the part that I’m hoping will work, that young people will say ok now I know what to do.”

These hopes might be borne out, for one young woman who has only just started work on the site was clear that she wanted “to be able to help young people.’ Great emphasis is now being placed on youth all round, for it is clear to all that this is the only way to make the project sustainable. This may work in the end, but at present the site seems to work largely because of the presence of the charismatic elders. The batons must be handed on very carefully if the site is to retain its popularity and effectiveness. The art of story telling is learned over time and the youngsters have yet to acquire the gravitas and timing necessary to convey their stories effectively. This may well come of course, for this is how oral traditions are maintained the world over. And maybe the youngsters will bring in new ‘tricks’ to get their message across to modern visitors. Certainly, modern technology may be able to assist in capturing much of what the current elders have to give by way of oral and visual testimony. That will be necessary to add to the ‘archive’.

Just as children were the focus of the ‘assimilation’, so they are for the revival. ‘The alienation of land required the alienation of children’ (Sissons, 2005). Hence now the children are being reclaimed. The repossession of land and children had to be pursued through legal and political action. This has entailed the ‘creation of spaces - literal and cultural – that are protected from the intrusion of state authorities and within which indigenous self determination may be pursued’ (Sissons, 2005:100). Tourist sites like these, which provide spaces, roles and opportunities for the children to learn and live their culture is often a very good way of reclaiming them. One guest noted that, “I saw them teaching the children, teaching them the language; they are not letting them die, they are teaching them the old ways; it’s a good thing to see.” And most important, the guest felt that this was “valuable not just for here, but all round the world.” During my visit, a local school group from the same band, but another town, visited the site and camped for the night. Food was made and workshops given: the children were happy to be there and experience the place. More workshops like these would be good not just for indigenous school groups, but all schools – a place to learn from one another.

In posing these questions about the future and sustainability to the guests, one replied that he thought it would become more popular:

Because people are trying to become more earthly and green. Look at history, so much we don’t hear in schools. So people want to know, foreigners come here, what’s happening here, we want to know. If you learn from the past it paves way for future – it’s important we know about past, in a way they were wiser but something’s been lots in between, and that’s what people get from this place, they learn. It’s when they start thinking and feeling, opening themselves up to receiving this – it’s about the encounter with another person.

It has been well said that ‘responsible tourism is a job of not transporting visitors into a lovely country, but of rebuilding receptivity, both for the traveller and for those organising such tourism.’ (Leopold, 1996)

For tourism to be sustainable, what is presented should be produced on the basis of local knowledge. These interactions that deal with the past, the discourses and practises between hosts and guests can empower everyone. Whilst it is important that indigenous peoples strongly influence these interactions and engagements, it is important to note the role the guests play. Guests also play their part in negotiating

cultural meaning, and political work is being done here in that the ideologies being affirmed and created work to define the self and with that the other. There are many different kinds of cultural moments and different levels of engagement that take place. Guests arrive in different states of preparedness and with many different preconceptions about what they are going to encounter. ‘The important question is not sustaining tourism for visitors, but sustaining citizens through the sharing of their culture and homeland. Its important we recognise that these are two different questions and the latter ultimately decides the former.’ (Ritcher 2006: 37) Interpreting Aboriginal culture is about asking for permission and sharing respect for Aboriginal culture and traditional awareness.

The initial development of the site owed much to German entrepreneurs who did much to encourage local people and provide the marketing and business acumen necessary to make a mark. It is acknowledged that the site faltered a bit after that initial effort and people are more aware of the need to develop commercial ‘savvy’ in order to survive. They want to re-create the European market again for what they have to offer. They are experimenting with more interactive workshops designed to engage visitors with the nature of what it feels like to be victims and marginalised. Such experiences can be challenging, but they represent a positive way forward, and one that carries integrity. Relations between relatively poorer hosts and relatively wealthy visitors will always be fraught with difficulties, especially when one adds in so many cultural differences. Yet these sites are prospering at the moment, the people involved are keen to make them work and have got much out of them, and government agencies and international bodies seem committed to aiding the process as part of a re-balancing – redress even for past wrongs.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

My main conclusion to this thesis is that ‘cultural tourism’ can be a form of revitalization for indigenous peoples, a force for good and empowerment. My fieldwork at the X’atsull Heritage Village was an illuminating experience. I visited with an array of preconceptions drawn from wide reading in the field of ‘cultural tourism’, hence the questions about ‘authenticity’ and ‘spirituality’ that have helped to form the structure of this thesis. I went with many questions and concerns: how ‘real’ would it be? How would I find the tourists and their hosts? Would I be let down by the experience? Yet the abiding impression with which I return home is best captured in the last chapter about the value of cultural exchanges. I have also returned with a better understanding of cultural traditions and how they are preserved and mediated over time; I am less anxious about concerns about authenticity and ‘invasion of privacy’ with regard to ‘spirituality’. I also came to appreciate that the differences between hosts and guests are perhaps not as large as we might expect: both groups of people were interested in gaining from their shared encounters – and these were of great value to both.

It may be true of all case studies based on fieldwork, but I have come away with a strong sense of the difference between theory and practice. I have also learned some valuable lessons about listening skills, patience, sensing moods, ‘going with the flow’ and appreciating the complexities of life when seen from many angles. Maybe that is part of the experience of stepping into another world for a while, something that all the tourists also value. Nothing went quite as I anticipated in my work: I did not reside at the site as much as I thought I would; the cultural elements in the tours were not as explicit as I had expected; no great effort was made to ‘put on a show’. I found this very engaging and heartening; the literature produced is honest about what the site can offer. My hosts were likewise friendly and engagingly direct in their responses to my questions; my fears that I would encounter some shyness and reserve in speaking about ‘delicate’ matters evaporated. I feel that I have experienced an honest encounter, much as I think, do most of the tourists.

Everyone I met on this site spoke appreciatively of the value of the cultural exchanges that were constantly occurring. And this applied to the hosts and guides as much as to the visitors. Everyone seemed to appreciate the need for mutual respect in his or her various encounters. The tours sparked interesting and appropriate questions and often led to wide-ranging discussions.

I hope I have demonstrated that 'cultural tourism' is not about visitor viewing a static, 'replica past' that is fixed in a particular time warp. It is a *process* by which visitors and hosts alike mediate a living tradition. And that process has great value for the indigenous people involved for it helps to preserve their tradition and past and to renew it through younger generations. It is thus part of the struggle of indigenous peoples to regain rights and dignity that may have been lost. The heritage sites offer valuable 'space' in which freedoms can be exercised and demons exorcised. It is noteworthy that the good practice endorsed by the AtBC considers control of sites by the indigenous people concerned as a critical point to success. A feature of these sites is the maintenance of an oral tradition frequently overlooked in the standard schooling offered in the country and provinces.

Returning to the concerns that one sees in the literature, I hope my chapters on 'authenticity' and 'spirituality' give pause for thought. In contrast to some scholarly literature that is preoccupied with the search for 'truth' and 'historical accuracy', I argue that 'authenticity' - with regard to living cultures - is a concept that is best articulated and negotiated by the individual. It is a process of understanding that cannot be viewed in the same way, as say, a painting or a museum object. I have also hopefully highlighted the power structures at play when one group decrees the authenticity of another, and in so doing, renders something else 'inauthentic'. In the same way, notions of 'spirituality' are best approached through the eyes of an individual and his or her experience; much is in the eye of the beholder. A site can provide and encourage a setting for spirituality, but it is up to the individual whether they will make that connection or not. There are no guarantees, and nor are expectations exaggerated.

In my experience, the visitors to this site came with open eyes and realistic expectations; they were not dewy-eyed romantics from the west. When events involving craftwork, singing and cookery were put on, people participated as they

wished. Nobody was forced to do anything, and people were free to wander the site, as they liked. There was no feeling that these events were specially staged. In this way, unlike what sometimes occurs in Europe, the presentation of the past was not somehow ‘devalued’ by the manner of presentation; what many have commented upon as the ‘Disneyfication’ of the past. Nor therefore is there any sense that the indigenous people have ‘sold out’ in putting on the events that they offer. This is interesting in debates about ‘indigenous tourism’ for scholars have been quick to criticise as if this is the case – it is a form of being patronising.

What cannot be denied is that the X’atsull Heritage Village lies in a beautiful, breathtaking location. It would be hard for it not to succeed as a visitor attraction, regardless of the quality and integrity of what is provided by the hosts. What makes it special is the concern that has been shown in presenting the site by the local community. It is a very relaxing environment, unlike many brash, western tourist venues. I appreciate that I have only skimmed the surface of what I might find out about this site, its people, their aspirations for the future, their pride in past achievements, and sense of security about what they now run as a business. More could be learned therefore about what this site reveals about ‘cultural tourism’, the role of indigenous people, and the impact of such work. It would be helpful to place this in larger context to other operations of a similar kind in British Columbia. Expanding the database of those interviewed would obviously provide a fuller study, but I am not sure that it would alter my main findings. This has proved to be a fruitful case study, one from which I have learned much both about content and method, and one which in a small way might prove useful to my hosts and inform the work of AtBC. It also hopefully provides evidence of the value of fieldwork in informing scholarship in this field.

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Appendices

Pictures



Figure 1: Picture of X'atsull Heritage Site



Figure 2: Picture of inside a teepee at the X'atsull Heritage Village.



Figure 3: 'Hosts' demonstrating traditional 'pit cooking' to the guests.



Figure 4: 'Hosts' preparing food for 'guests'



Figure 5: The 'Sweat Lodge' on site at X'atsull Heritage Village.



Figure 6: 'The pit house' traditionally used by the Shuswap Nation



Figure 7: The X'atsull Heritage Village at sunset



Figure 8: Tied ribbons representing prayers



Figure 9: 'Hosts' and 'Guests' gathered at an 'out house' (benefit of Olympics funding)



Figure 10: Inside a 'Pit House' - 3 Hosts play music and chat.



Figure 11: 'Guests' watching a 'host' fish in the traditional way.



Figure 12: Hosts fishing on the Frazer River



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Figure 13: AtBC Brochure for Indigenous Tourism; including X'atsull Heritage Village.

Interview Questions

For Indigenous Peoples:

Background

- How did you come to work here?
- Why do you wish to be a part of this?
- How do you feel about sharing your traditions with visitors?
- Why do you think the visitors come here?
- The Village has won several awards, why do you think this is?

Questions about religion and rituals.

- Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual?
- How did you come to learn these rituals?
- Are the rituals adapted for tourists, if so how?
- Are the rituals still used in your community?

Perceptions

- Are there any boundaries to what rituals/ceremonies you will share and when?
- Do you have any concerns about sharing rituals/ traditions / ceremonies?
- To what extent does religion play a part in these rituals?
- How much religious symbolism is explained to the tourist?
- How is this work satisfying?

Future

- How do you see the future of this Village and this kind of tourism as a whole?

For the visitors:

Background

- Why have you come here?
- Have you been to similar sites before?
- What do you hope to gain from your visit/experiences here?

Questions about religion and rituals

- Do you consider yourself religious?
- Are you spiritually interested in the rituals?

Perceptions

- How much of the religious elements involved in the rituals and ceremonies is explained and do you feel a connection to that?
- As a guest, how does it feel to be taking part in the rituals?
- Do you feel that this site offers a 'genuine' insight into the lives and histories of Xat'sull people?
- What gives you satisfaction in such a visit?

Future

- Do you see this type of tourism becoming more popular in the future?

For the site managers and supervisors:

Background

- How did you come to work here?
- The Village has won several awards why do you think this is?
- What are the main issues and concerns when creating a heritage site like this?
- What do you think draws the visitors here?
- How did you decide how much to charge the visitors?
- Do you have many visitors that come back each year?

Questions about religion and rituals

- Do you consider yourself religious or spiritual?
- Are there any boundaries to what rituals/ceremonies will or will not be shown?
- How are boundaries decided upon?

Perceptions

- How much of the religious elements involved in rituals and ceremonies are explained and do you feel a connection to that?
- How do you evaluate the success of your venture/activities?
- Do you feel the site offers a genuine insight into the lives and histories of the Xat'sull people?

Future

- What are your aims and hopes for the heritage village?
Do you see this type of tourism becoming more popular in Canada? (..or do you see this type of tourism as sustainable?)