

## 6.2 Issues Overview

The Shuswap region has abundant resources, a favourable location, and the impetus to grow its mid and back-country tourism opportunities. Its key development challenges are to:

- identify specific tourism opportunities;
- establish the local commitment to realize these opportunities;
- develop quality products that will be competitive with existing products offered both within and outside the Shuswap region; and,
- attract the necessary financing and investment capital.

The consultants have heard from numerous community stakeholders regarding their goals and objectives for the tourism sector in the Shuswap region. The key community challenges are to:

- develop tourism products in a manner consistent with community values, and maximizes community participation in terms of ownership and employment;
- see that economic benefits of tourism development are realized within the local communities;
- implement tourism development in a manner that is sustainable and that fits with overall community social and economic objectives.

A number of **key issues** were identified during the course of the project through community consultations, advisory committee meetings, through research, and as direct input from community members and tourism industry professionals. The project team strongly feels that these issues need to be addressed in the course of product development planning if the Shuswap is to further develop its tourism industry. The following points cite the key tourism-related issues identified during this study:

- **The Shuswap communities need their own tourism development strategies.** Tourism is an active and important industry in all the communities of the Shuswap region. The communities recognize its importance and the economic spin-offs that can be gleaned from tourism. Salmon Arm, perceived by many as the “regional hub” of the Shuswap, has clearly identified tourism as a desirable sector for development and economic growth. As a result, a five year tourism development strategy was recently (May 2001) completed for Salmon Arm. This document was formulated with the objective of expanding the tourism base and, ultimately, benefitting the community economically. The other four areas of the Shuswap region need to engage in a similar planning exercise to produce short and long term tourism development strategies. These can provide a starting point for the comprehensive development of tourism in their respective communities.
- **The Shuswap communities need a regional image.** All of the communities in the Shuswap region are aware of the importance of partnerships and the opportunities and potential which lie in these partnerships and networking with other tourism organizations (i.e. TOTA and Okanagan-based tourism). However, many seem

unsure about where the Shuswap area fits as a tourism entity into the total regional picture. How should the Shuswap be marketed? Should the Shuswap align itself with the Okanagan? Or develop a separate identity? Many tourism operators within the various five communities realize the importance and cost-savings in marketing tourism jointly and by gaining access to a larger market thereby reducing marketing costs. At the same time, many recognize the need to develop a separate identity. Once this dilemma is talked about and solved and all five areas in the study area agree on where the Shuswap fits into the overall tourism picture, other pieces of the puzzle will fall into place. At that time, the most viable and appropriate method of marketing the whole area can be developed. A slogan befitting and unique to the Shuswap might be utilized in partnerships with the Okanagan or possibly Revelstoke.

- **The Shuswap region needs to market itself more effectively.** One of the tourism problems identified by several communities was the fact that there is a need for a central booking agency for all the many different tourism operators. A few people mentioned the difficulties visitors experienced in trying to obtain answers from tourism operators who were seldom at their phones. Others felt it was important for tourists to be able to book a total destination tour.
- **A large proportion of drivers in the Shuswap region during the summer months are simply passing through, and don't stop.** The communities recognize the need to attract a larger share of the drive-by market and bring more bus tours to the area, thereby having tourists stay longer in the Shuswap. The Shuswap region is frequently viewed by tourists as an area they “go through” rather than stop at overnight. This problem was identified by the Salmon Arm Tourism Development Strategy, and an objective formulated “*to attract passer-by traffic to visit and stay longer in Salmon Arm.*” Bus tours could then be linked to other tourist activities such as road tours and boats tours, etc. Some members of the community feel that it is important to capture the overseas bus tour market by marketing the Shuswap in the Lower Mainland and the Prairies. Specific tour bus stopping areas need to be developed in the Shuswap in order to offer the tour bus patrons an experience when they stop here.
- **All interests need to agree on and have a say in what and how to develop tourism.** There is a similar level of confusion and ambivalence about the development of tourism and the reasons for developing it within each community. On the one hand, although it is recognized that tourism brings economic benefits to the community -- this, however, has to be balanced with the concerns of the people in the communities about congestion, pollution, impacts and damage to local natural areas, etc. The local snowmobile, cross country skiing, mountaineering club members’ concerns and issues all need to be addressed, listened to, and their voices need to be heard and included in any conversations about developing their specific areas for tourism. This needs to be a “win-win” situation for all concerned.

Salmon Arm has recognized some of these important issues when they developed their tourism strategy and this is observed in the Salmon Arm’s mandate for their tourism development strategy: “*To provide the leadership for well managed growth of the tourism sector in Salmon Arm and identify initiatives and opportunities that will provide a collaborative and cooperative approach to tourism services in the community.*”

- **In several of the smaller communities, such as Sorrento and the North Shuswap, there is a lack of the basic necessary infrastructure and facilities for tourism.**

The shoreline communities need to be linked to Shuswap Lake. A relationship between this valuable resource and the communities must be established and fostered. Facilities such as docking facilities and wharves, public access to the beach areas, public parks, community campgrounds, public washrooms and rest stops with sani dumps need to be in place prior to development of certain tourist activities. It will be difficult to arrange financing, or attract investment, without demonstrating that the required infrastructure is present to support tourism initiatives -- for example, wharves are necessary in order to support a lake cruise product.

At the same time, there appears to be a conflict of interest between residents and visitors regarding the use of the public shoreline for picnics, walking, swimming, canoes, and houseboat landings. A compromise needs to be reached in order to satisfy these opposing views between the highly taxed property owners and the public that wants to use the lake recreationally.

- **The Trans Canada highway needs to be improved in order to foster tourism growth.** The Trans Canada Highway was perceived by some as a big drawback for tourists. It is considered unsafe, in poor condition, and in desperate need of improvements. Those communities located on or near the Trans Canada Highway (i.e. Sorrento, Sicamous, Salmon Arm) are the ones most affected by the overall poor condition of the Trans Canada Highway. Many felt that with a single artery into the Shuswap, the main highway, the Trans Canada, needs to be safe for traffic. If it isn't safe some felt that tourists will go elsewhere. There is a strong movement taking place on the part of communities affected by the unsafe stretch of the Trans Canada Highway (i.e. Revelstoke and Sicamous) to lobby government for improvements and a publication outlining their efforts was recently placed in local papers in the Shuswap.
- **The communities require better signage.** Several of the smaller communities such as Sorrento, Sicamous, and Falkland indicated that their towns lack identification not only on maps but also in the poor or non-existent signage from major surrounding cities such as Vernon, Kamloops and Kelowna. The Ministry of Transportation and Highways needs to be lobbied and informed of the important problem which could easily be rectified.
- **There is uncertainty about the future of Forest Service roads in BC.** One of the key issues facing any tourism development, especially back country activities, is the up-and-coming changes in the Ministry of Forests' role in terms of recreation in the province of British Columbia. At this point in time no one is exactly sure what those changes will be --but access to Ministry of Forests roads could definitely become an issue in the future. The Ministry of Forests will not be maintaining them in the future but will be passing this responsibility off on to private industry.
- **The off-loading of Ministry of Forest recreation sites and downsizing of BC Parks.** The *off loading by the Provincial Government of the maintenance of recreation trails, roads and other facilities* announced by the Ministry of Forests, BC Parks and the Federal Government has exacting consequences on the recreational

landscape in the Region. Closures of recreation sites and trails are imminent. Non-profit organizations and local governments are going to be increasingly responsible for this important tourism asset.

- **Tourism businesses require better linkages for their marketing efforts.** There was recognition on the part of all of the communities that there are many opportunities in the tourism area to link various tourist activities such as bus and boat tours, road tours and bird watching/nature observation, golfing and winery tours, etc. Once these tourism opportunities are created a well developed linked web site is an important communication tool which could be used to link these many various tourist activities.

