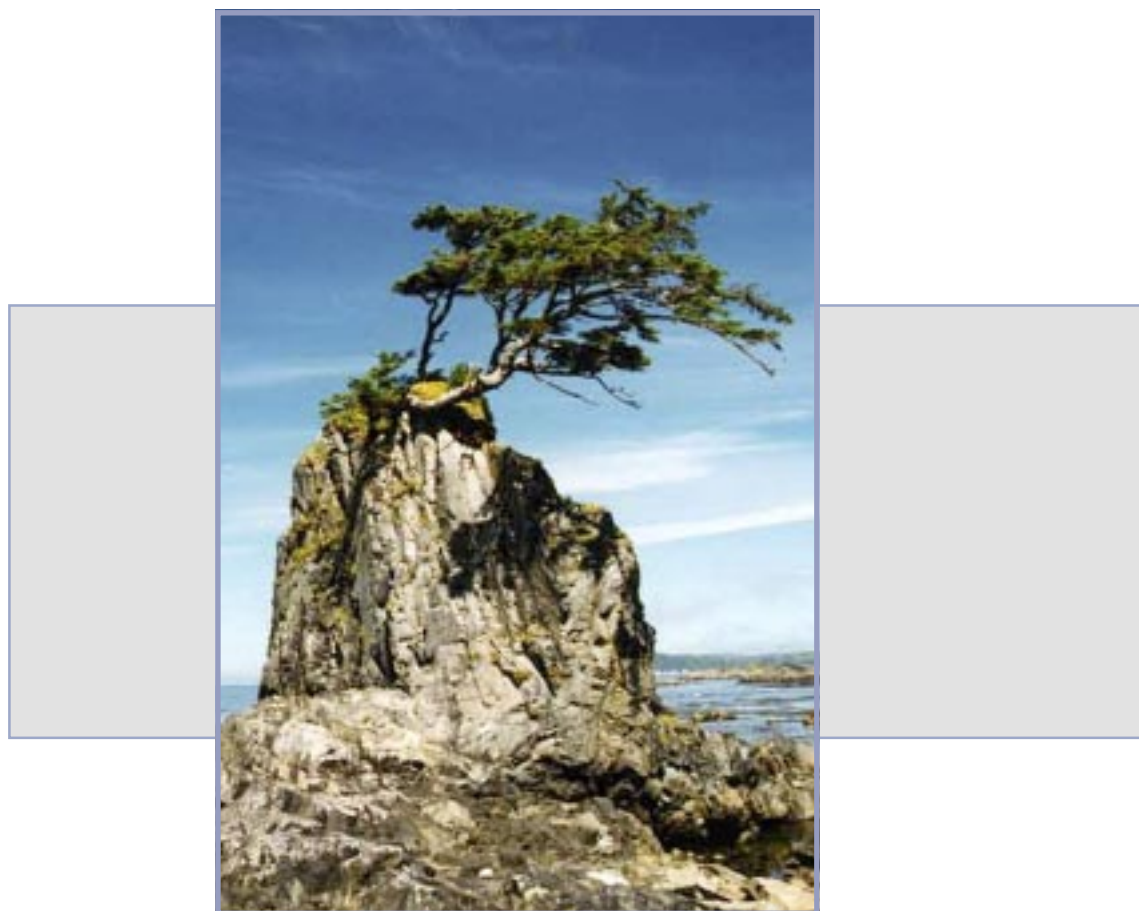


— Haida Gwaii

Queen Charlotte Islands —



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HERITAGE  
TOURISM  
STRATEGY

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January 2003

Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands Heritage Tourism Strategy Working Group

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Cover photo by Rolf Bettner

This document was developed through consultation with Islanders by Islanders, and outlines what is important about where and how we live and what we must do to protect, celebrate, and share our heritage.

The success of the Heritage Tourism Strategy relies on the realization that all the definitions and objectives are linked, and must be respected and implemented equally.

We welcome all visitors to Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands who will respect and honour our definitions of heritage and the linked objectives and actions in this strategy.



**On Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands heritage can be defined as having five integrated elements. These include the following:**

**1. The relationship between healthy ecosystems and our way of life.**

This aspect of our heritage celebrates the direct relationship between healthy ecosystems and our unique island way of life. It celebrates our moderate climate and its influence on the biodiversity and inter-connectedness of ocean and terrestrial ecosystems, and a generous and wild land- and seascape that provides an abundance of fresh food. We recognize that genuine respect for ecological integrity, inside and outside our protected places, is an important part of local culture and a foundation of what we want to share with visitors. We also recognize that we live on islands that have been altered by natural and human influences.

**2. A deep and profound respect for Haida culture.**

This aspect of our heritage celebrates the enduring presence of Haida civilization throughout the islands. It respects Haida ancestral spirits, Haida spiritual and artistic connection to homeland and sea, and the importance of four-season food harvesting to the Haida way of life. We recognize that our heritage is shaped by Haida belief in the inter-connectedness of all things, and the vitality and continuity of living Haida traditions.

### 3. A strong determination to preserve our unique island way of life.

This aspect of our heritage celebrates connectedness to the place that is our home. It values the remoteness, quiet, safety and unhurried pace of island life, the feeling of being alive and belonging, and the right to privacy and solitude in our surroundings. We recognize and honour the generosity that allows open access to extensive lands, public places, and shorelines. Our island life is influenced by a spiritual connection to homeland and sea, and realized in the abundance of food that is harvested and shared locally. This aspect of our heritage also celebrates experiential knowledge, a sharing between island cultures, and a spirit of community that values friendship, family and mutual support.

### 4. An Inspired Relationship To Place.

This aspect of our heritage recognizes the beauty and the nature of Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands and its power to heal and shape the way we think and feel. It celebrates the evidence of Haida culture in immediate and remote areas, clean air, natural sounds and smells of forest and sea. It celebrates uncrowded, expansive spaces and beaches, ancient forests, abundant wildlife, and unobstructed sunrises, sunsets and night skies. Our heritage is founded upon the cultures, traditions, arts and creative expression that are born from the land and sea.

**5. Community integrity and the importance of that which is local.**

This aspect of our heritage celebrates the immense value placed on that which is local. It promotes respect for lands, waters and the people of Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands, and local leadership in establishing and maintaining social, economic and community stability on the islands. It honours our diverse island communities and the need for clear communication between them.

Honesty, integrity and trust are the foundation of island life.

## Linked Objectives of the Heritage Tourism Strategy

This action plan does not presuppose that the Heritage Tourism Strategy Working Group will undertake all the actions identified. The success of the Heritage Tourism Strategy requires the support and perhaps the creation of bodies functionally responsible for the implementation for each of the objectives and actions.



**Encourage islanders, local institutions and off-island interests to understand and respect the Heritage Tourism Strategy's definitions of heritage.**

### Actions

- Encourage incorporation of definitions and objectives of our Heritage Tourism Strategy into business plans and into the design, delivery and marketing of products and services that help us protect what is important about where and how we live on these Islands.
- Create a handbook that illustrates how the Heritage Tourism Strategy can be applied in any business operation or organization involved in or impacting tourism.
- Create and maintain a Website.
- Establish protocols and a network of media partners that build understanding and on-going support for the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Develop a system to support and recognize local and off-island tourism operations that have adopted the Heritage Tourism Strategy's definitions, objectives and actions.

**Cultivate a deep and profound respect for Haida culture.**

### Actions

- Conduct ongoing consultation with Hereditary Chiefs, Elders, the Council of the Haida Nation, and Band Councils for direction on how and what to share and protect in terms of Haida culture and values.

**Encourage tourism operators, visitors and local residents to maintain healthy marine and terrestrial ecosystems.**

Actions

- Develop a code of ethics for visitors and tourism operators and guidelines for local residents that encourage respect for local culture, and marine and terrestrial ecosystems.
- Encourage links between tourism operators and local community groups, organizations and agencies involved in marine and terrestrial ecosystem research and restoration.

**Encourage mutual respect, honesty, integrity and trust in our relationships with off-island tourism and associated interests.**

Actions

- Encourage ongoing consultation with local and off-island tourism and associated interests, non-government organizations, and local government, and respond to recommendations provided.
- Encourage development of presentations/meet and greet services for clients of off-island interests.
- Encourage pro-active introduction of the Heritage Tourism Strategy off-island.

**Ensure that the Heritage Tourism Strategy contributes to building a truly sustainable island economy.**

Actions

- Determine, collect and evaluate relevant baseline information such as visitor numbers, visitor demographics and expectations, activity and spending patterns, and local economic impacts.
- Determine what information will be needed in the future and how it will be collected.
- Determine through consultation, the nature and amount of tourism growth desired and where, when, and how that growth should take place.
- Encourage all industries that do business on the Islands to partner in support of a sustainable tourism economy.

- Develop and schedule on-island events and celebrations for locals and visitors that embody the objectives of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Support tourism operators who employ island residents and invest in the local economy, within the context of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Promote and endorse a wide range of tourism opportunities and products consistent with the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Work to ensure tourism development is compatible with sustainability of, and access to, resources for islanders.
- Encourage visitors and tourism operators to buy locally and support the island economy.

**Encourage the incorporation of the Heritage Tourism Strategy into the marine and land use planning processes for the Islands.**

Actions

- Develop standards and indicators that can be easily measured to ensure that tourism development is not taking place at the expense of defined heritage values.
- Encourage industry and multiple levels of government to support the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Promote places where visitors are encouraged to go and encourage local consultation to identify places of natural, cultural and spiritual importance and support setting aside these areas for appropriate uses.
- Develop heritage guidelines for building, signage and infrastructure that are consistent with the Heritage Tourism Strategy.

**Establish partnerships with educational programs and institutions to ensure tourism-related activities are conducted responsibly and appropriately.**

Actions

- Work with Haida language and cultural education programs where relevant to the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Partner with educational institutions to establish on-island tourism training programs and educational programming

that celebrate local knowledge and experience within the context of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.

- Partner, where appropriate, with local agencies and non-government organizations already involved in designing curricula and educational programs.
- Develop local education programs that demonstrate to islanders how they can be involved in making the Heritage Tourism Strategy happen.
- Develop tourism-training programs based on clear protocols regarding the sharing of island heritage and historical information.

### **Respect the knowledge and experience of local people.**

#### *Actions*

- Encourage local residents to become active as teachers in educational and interpretive tourism training programs.
- Encourage islanders to participate in educational and interpretive training programming offered by locals.

### **Improve and develop tourism employment opportunities for island residents.**

#### *Actions*

- Identify and develop opportunities for increased and meaningful employment for islanders in the local tourism industry.
- Encourage tourism operators to hire experienced locals to deliver programs.

### **Build educational and interpretive support for the Heritage Tourism Strategy in the expanded tourism community.**

#### *Actions*

- Develop a glossary of commonly held local definitions relevant to the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Establish interpretive standards that support the Heritage Tourism Strategy.

- Consult organizations and island residents regarding post-contact history.
- Produce material that will educate visitors on local culture, history, and values, and that outlines acceptable and respectful behaviour while visiting the Islands.
- Encourage responsible advertising that establishes reasonable visitor expectations, is truthful in content, and respectful when using culturally-sensitive words, images, and material.
- Develop material that identifies places on the Islands where tourism is encouraged consistent with the definitions and objectives of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Develop island hospitality guidelines for tourism-related businesses based on the definitions and objectives outlined in the Heritage Tourism Strategy and designed to make visitors feel welcome.
- Produce a helpful guide book and/or manual as a basis for communications and interpretation that relates to the Heritage Tourism Strategy.

**Determine how to best assure on-going implementation of the Heritage Tourism Strategy objectives and vision.**

*Actions*

- Identify an island organization based on non-political representation and consensus decision-making that will have responsibility for the ongoing implementation of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Identify mechanisms to build broad local-government and industry support for the definitions and principles embodied in the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Identify mechanisms for feedback from Hereditary Chiefs, Elders, island governments, community organizations, and the public regarding on-going implementation of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Develop a strategy to ensure off-island government bodies and tourism organizations build the Heritage Tourism Strategy philosophy into tourism product development and promotions.
- Develop a media strategy to promote the Heritage Tourism Strategy.
- Identify indicators and monitoring mechanisms to measure the on-going success of the Heritage Tourism Strategy.