

**Muskwa-Kechika Program Manager  
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**Relevant Modules  
for a  
Wilderness Host Program**

Submitted by the

**Northern Rockies Alaska Highway  
Tourism Association**

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The recommendations that follow are from the text of the document and are summarized as preview of the full report.

- 1) It is recommended that NRAHTA develop a relationship with Leave No Trace (LNT) and adopt the seven principles from the Leave No Trace concept into the educational package for guides, outfitters and others.
- 2) It is recommended that NRAHTA develop a relationship with Tread Lightly (TL) and adopt the five principles from the Tread Lightly concept into the education package for the guides, outfitters and others.
- 3) It is recommended that NRAHTA's educational package aim to develop an industry-led local effort to set environmental standards, similar to what led to the Yukon's Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act. The resulting document may be a resource to various government and non-government agencies.
- 4) It is recommended that NRAHTA expand the scope of the training course to include the development of a pool of experts to form a "Northern Rockies Educational Review Committee".
- 5) It is recommended that that NRAHTA respond to the interest expressed by both the Ecotourism Society and the Conservation International organization and develop relationships that will aid in research of information that can be applied to local solutions.

## **1.0) INTRODUCTION**

The research that has been completed explored existing modules of backcountry ethics and minimum impact recreation. The purpose was to examine the modules currently in use elsewhere to determine how they are delivered. The identified modules will be developed into an educational package and presented to the working guides and backcountry operators in the Northern Rockies.

The second component of the research examined how recognition of the importance of this educational package needs to be supported by the owners of guiding and ecotourism businesses. To promote themselves as environmentally sound operators, owners require their business ethics to convey this message loudly and clearly. Best practice modules and environmental auditing are reviewed as methods to promote a substantiated adherence to ecological sensibilities.

British Columbia has a bright future in ecotourism in all of its forms. Although the product here ranks among the best in the world there appears to be a void of support for ecotourism by the province and by operators in general. The belief would be that the product could develop a marquee status on its own because much of it remains in pristine condition.

This overlooks trends that are happening worldwide. Consumers of ecotourism are becoming better educated and are demanding a more substantial product. People are realizing the value of natural settings and that tourism can have both a positive and negative impact on destinations. In response to this, tourism operators worldwide are expected to be more accountable for their impact.

People are beginning to realize the importance of tourism and as such, affiliated operators are becoming major players in natural resource planning decisions and policy matters. Unfortunately, British Columbia has been slow to initiate tourism as a significant representative at that level due partly to the tourism industry not forming a cohesive lobby for its position.

This report will examine advances made as nearby as the Yukon or as distant as Australia. These advances range from industry led self-regulation that has become legislation for wilderness tourism operators to a National Accreditation Program for Ecotourism Outfitters. As consumers become better informed about the impact their vacations will have on the destination, and as they learn how they can contribute to that destination, it will be the providers who demonstrate this ethic that will remain industry leaders.

## **2.0) LITERATURE REVIEW** (Publicly Distributed Material)

The purpose of this search was to find relevant material that communicated "proper conduct in the wilderness" and that was readily available in Northeastern BC. The focus was on backcountry ethics and minimum impact by users of the outdoors for recreation, guiding or tourism business purposes.

The material currently available (one-page pamphlet on different subjects) was obtained from various government agencies in Prince George, Fort St. John and Fort Nelson. Very little of it stood out and often very few were in stock on the shelves. Had this had been a casual effort to find this type of material, one would assume that literature was hard to come by or was of little concern to any of the ministries.

The most relevant pamphlets found were overviews of Codes of Ethics. The majority of these were prepared, at least in part, by the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORCBC). The ORCBC is mentioned only through use of their logo on the front and contact information on the back of the brochures. In operation since 1976, the Council serves as an umbrella organization representing over 40 outdoor recreation organizations and conservation groups. The ORCBC asserts that "the diversity of our members is one of our greatest strengths".

The documents were titled:

- A Wilderness Code of Ethics
- Trail Users' Code of Ethics
- A Code of Ethics : For the Enjoyment of Outdoor British Columbia
- Back Country Sanitation

Since ORCBC is a non-profit organization these pamphlets had been published through the financial assistance of the BC Ministry of Environment & Parks and the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture. In addition, Forest Renewal BC and the Federal Ministry of the Environment provided funding.

Given their size, the pamphlets were comprehensive. Most of them cited *Soft Paths* by Bruce Hampton and David Cole as a reference (the 1988 edition was updated in 1995). The book is a publication of the National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS) which has been in operation since 1965 in the U.S. Its mission is "to be the best source and teacher of leadership and wilderness skills that protect the user and the environment" (Hampton & Cole piii). The bulk of the NOLS educational agenda is now handled by the non-profit organization, Leave No Trace.

Another pamphlet, Recreational Off-Highway Vehicles: Tips for Responsible OHV Use is produced by the BC Forest Service through its Forests Practices Branch. The message here addresses issues such as the use of off-road vehicles including four-wheel drive, ATV's and trail bikes. A common sense approach is used to cover issues such as respect for the wildlife, the environment, and being an ambassador for one's sport. The

document makes reference to Tread Lightly Canada, a national branch of the well established US Organization.

This tip sheet is a good beginning; it is advised to refer to the Tread Lightly Responsible User Guides. Tread Lightly's documents are more comprehensive and have an established recognition value.

- Northern Explorer BC Parks Visitor's Guide – a 96 page volume on Provincial Parks in Northern BC, it provides practical information generally aimed at the "car camping crowd"

Originally produced by the former Ministry of Environment & Lands Parks this guide is not in-depth enough to advise people interested in backcountry recreation. The information on matters such as no trace camping, bear proofing, wild life viewing and a pre-trip checklist are scattered and lost in the editorial content.

BC Parks is setting aside greater numbers of wilderness areas and must take an initiative to produce a more comprehensive document for the users of this type of setting. Two pamphlets produced and distributed by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources provide excellent examples of Wilderness Guides and Checklists. (See Yukon Territory Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act).

## **2.1) Current Developments**

### **2.1.1) Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture British Columbia**

A document also worth mentioning in this literature review is a press release issued by the Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 1999. It was a leading story in newspapers the following day. The source document was examined for this report.

(Source: [www.sbtc.gov.bc.ca](http://www.sbtc.gov.bc.ca))

#### *Waddell launches Ecotourism, Adventure Travel Strategy*

*The announcement by Mr. Ian Waddell, the Minister for Small Business, Tourism and Culture acknowledges the "value" in economic terms of tourism in general and adventure tourism in particular to B.C.'s economy. The plan has three key components for development.*

- *A gateway community program will help communities expand their existing resources and develop their potential to serve as gateways to parks, trails, and other recreation opportunities*
- *Tourism Opportunity Studies will provide assessments of the potential for specific communities to diversify and develop ecotourism products and infrastructure*
- *The development of high standards of business operation and skills will lead to best practices, thereby enhancing B.C.'s desirability as an ecotourism destination*

All of this sounds promising but comes up short compared to what will later be examined in this report. The press release states that "Adventure tourism injected an estimated \$892 million into B.C.'s economy in 1998". If the market is that substantial already, why lose valuable time to feasibility studies? Since the studies are restricted to

a few locations, the overlooked communities will have to develop strategy and product on their own or risk falling farther behind. The government must make a more assertive province-wide effort in concert with all other ministries and agencies. This will ensure that British Columbia can remain competitive while not jeopardizing the valuable resources that generate significant income for the province.

### **2.1.2) The Canadian Tourism Commission**

The Canadian Tourism Commission has recently released a paper "Sustainable Development and Tourism". It is broadly based on the entire tourism industry but is worthy of mentioning since it may provide a hopeful direction that is being established by the CTC.

(Source: [http://www.ctc-ctx.com/en/ctc/partner\\_centre/aboutvision\\_mission.html](http://www.ctc-ctx.com/en/ctc/partner_centre/aboutvision_mission.html), this site may not be directly accessible without a password but that can be easily obtained).

### **2.2) The Purpose of the Literature Review**

The purpose was to demonstrate that general awareness and education of the population on this subject appears to be a low priority. Therefore, it was necessary to look beyond any provincial documents to source out what could be used to assemble the required educational package.

## **3.0) RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL MODULES**

Three sources of information have been selected as relevant models for the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association to draw material from and to form the basis of their guide, eco-outfitter education plan. The Leave No Trace program, The Tread Lightly Program and two pamphlets produced by the Yukon Department of Renewable Resources are examined.

### **3.1) The Leave No Trace Program**

#### **3.1.1) Background of Leave No Trace**

(Sources: Leave No Trace documents, website and personal communication)

The U.S. Forest Service initiated the Leave No Trace program in the 1970's. The move was a response to the dramatic increase of visitors to public lands. In 1984 the Forest Service partnered with the Bureau of Land Management and the National Outdoor Leadership School to advance the Leave No Trace program.

The National Outdoor Leadership School developed much of the curriculum and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the four federal land management agencies: the previously mentioned United States Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and now, included the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. The Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association of America and the Outdoor Recreation Coalition of America, amongst others, were also enlisted to further establish the Leave No Trace message in the public mindset.

Since then, Leave No Trace has become an independent non-profit organization and has a message that is supported by a wide range of land management agencies in the U.S. It continues to establish partnerships with media and corporate groups to spread the message and educate the public. The message stays current due to the work of an Education Review Committee.

### **3.1.2) The Leave No Trace Guide Books**

(Regional or User Specific)

The Outdoor Skills & Ethics series of booklets produced by Leave No Trace cover most of the bio-regions of the US and focus on specific activities such as caving or rock climbing. The format is standard and documents vary in length from fourteen to twenty-two pages. Sensitive issues such as high alpine hiking or fragility of desert and tundra eco-systems are discussed. User issues are also highlighted for the benefit of river or horse-pack travel and to emphasize consideration of all other users of wilderness settings. Many valuable tips are contained under all the principles rather than displaying them in "checklist fashion".

The guides conclude with references to documents that provide source material. The booklets are effective but Leave No Trace does intend for them to be the sole source of information for people venturing into the backcountry. These documents provide an excellent starting point for personal or professional use.

### **3.1.3) Adopting Leave No Trace**

The Leave No Trace message could be easily adapted for British Columbia and even be designed to address regional conditions. Localized efforts to adopt Leave No Trace into school districts and Scout groups have had some success. It would be practical to get agencies and government ministries to support the program. An effort in Northeastern BC coordinated with other localized endeavors to promote greater adherence to the Leave No Trace principles must be a goal.

**It is recommended that the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association develop a relationship with Leave No Trace (LNT) and adopt the seven principles into the educational package for guides, outfitters and operators.**

## **3.2) The Tread Lightly Program (TL)**

### **3.2.1) Background on Tread Lightly**

(Sources: Tread Lightly documents, website, and personal communication)

The US Forest Service launched Tread Lightly in 1985, an educational program to protect public and private land. The aim was to create an awareness of how to enjoy the outdoors as a recreation setting while minimizing the impacts. The emphasis was on responsible use of off-highway mechanized vehicles which were the means of access to the outdoor setting for many enthusiasts. The US Bureau of Land Management also adopted and has supported the program since its early stages.



Since 1990, the Tread Lightly message has become the responsibility of a non-profit organization in the United States and it now has international affiliates, including one in Canada. Tread Lightly continues to broaden the message of responsible use of the outdoors and off-highway vehicles. And has the support of a wide spectrum of federal and state agencies. Tread Lightly also has support and sponsorship from manufacturers of recreational products as well as media, enthusiast groups and individuals. The sole purpose of the organization is to educate recreationists on the respect and preservation of the great outdoors. This is accomplished through the production and distribution of literature, many user guides and pamphlets.

### **3.2.2) The Tread Lightly Guides to Responsible Use**

The Tread Lightly *Guides to Responsible Use* follow a basic format and convey an effective message for people who want to be active ambassadors for their sport. The message encourages getting outdoors and adhering to the TREAD acronym. Emphasis is placed on planning, safety, etiquette and skills for negotiating and being considerate of special terrain.

A section on minimum impact camping follows and provides a thorough set of instructions to guide outdoor enthusiasts to practice stewardship in the wilderness. It would be better to have readers of the Tread Lightly guides meet these standards of wilderness ethic rather debate the value of Tread Lightly vs. Leave No Trace.

The guidebook continues with checklists of vehicle maintenance tips to prepare the user for a wilderness experience. The final message promotes common sense and the importance of "Leaving a Good Impression". Worth noting is that the guides for ATV, trail bikes, 4WD and snowmobiling are funded by a grant through a major manufacturer of each product.

Tread Lightly also publishes *Tip Sheets* for activities such as camping, hiking, hunting, fishing and backcountry/cross-country skiing. The format of these sheets follows the TREAD acronym and provides practical advice specific to the activity.

### **3.2.3) Adopting Tread Lightly**

The Tread Lightly message is effective and offers identifiable literature. The Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association should take the lead in assembling an educational package for Northeastern BC and promote it within local and province-wide user groups. The Tread Lightly Canada organization (based in Ontario) and the 4WD Association of BC could be used to help with the recognition of the principles of Tread Lightly.

**It is recommended that the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association develop a relationship with Tread Lightly to adopt the five principles into the educational package for the guides, outfitters and operators.**

### **3.3) Yukon Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act**

#### **3.3.1) Background** (Source: The Act & Regulations, personal communication)

The Yukon government implemented the Yukon Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act on May 1, 1999. The Act requires all operators offering wilderness trips in the Yukon to have a license and to establish standard requirements. Such standards refer to first aid, insurance coverage, low impact camping and waste disposal. The goal is to ensure a quality experience for clients of tourism operators.

The Act considers anyone to be a "wilderness tourism operator" who provides a wilderness trip for a client or group "to gain reward or material or financial benefits". All hunting and guide outfitters who plan to expand off-season business and branch into wilderness tourism are bound by this legislation. It is separate from their hunting and guide outfitting regulations that are part of the Yukon Wildlife Act.

To obtain a Wilderness Tourism License essential requirements include:

- Valid Yukon Workers Compensation during the operating season
- Public Liability Insurance, a minimum of \$1 million Canadian
- Guides and Outfitters must have basic First Aid / CPR

The license fee is \$100.00 and must be renewed on an annual basis.

Once the license is obtained, it is a contract and the rules must be followed. This includes submitting reports and practicing the low impact camping and waste disposal regulations. The requirements will be enforced and the license can be revoked. This set of regulations was a cooperative effort between many existing wilderness tourism operators and the Yukon Government. The standards of operation had been in place. Wilderness tourism operators had been abiding by best practice standards before they were adopted into the Act and the Regulations.

#### **3.3.2) The Yukon Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act Regulations**

The Regulations are explained in Section 14 of the Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act and further defined in Section 11 of the Wilderness Tourism Licensing Regulations. These regulations are "sufficient for now" since their development is ongoing. They can be upgraded and refined as the situation presents itself (A. Jones personal comment). This Act indicates that interim solutions can bridge gaps rather than doing nothing which is not a practical solution.

#### **3.3.3) The Yukon's Recognition of LNT**

The Yukon Department of Renewable Resources has been promoting the message of Leave No Trace and minimum impact camping since 1987. It offers two effective documents available for public use, which educate and inform. "*The Wilderness Travellers' No Trace Checklist*" and "*Into the Yukon Wilderness*" are the brochures that create awareness and education about the issues. The penetration level of Leave No Trace into the Yukon society is impressive.

The following is a partial list which predates the recently passed Act. (Source: Leave No Trace Workshop Report December 1998)

- *The Wilderness Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon*
- *Yukon Territorial Government Hunter Education Program*
- *City of Whitehorse Outdoor Education Instructors*
- *The Adventure Tourism Program at Yukon College*
- *The Yukon Fish & Game Association*
- *Yukon Conservation Education Coordinator*
- *Scouts Canada of the Yukon*
- *Individual teachers depending on their background incorporate Leave No Trace*
- *Certain retailers are promoting the Leave No Trace message*

The public is better educated and is becoming more discriminating when choosing wilderness tourism outfitters. This explains why there has been an unwritten but adhered to code of conduct for many Yukon-based outfitters prior to the passage of the Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act. The two referred to booklets contain practical advice on all the "Leave No Trace" principles and local issues such as First Nations lands and etiquette regarding licensed trappers' established cabins, and bear awareness. The "Into the Yukon Wilderness" booklet begins with a section on safety and asks participants to *consider if they are skilled enough and prepared* to venture into areas where self-reliance is necessary.

The documents are widely distributed in both official languages and in German as well and will be available in Japanese by the spring of 2000. They lack the messages on Tread Lightly regarding the use of mechanized transport in the wilderness; however, work is in progress.

**It is recommended that NRAHTA's educational package aim to develop an industry-led effort to set environmental standards, similar to what led to the Yukon's Wilderness Tourism Licensing Act, the resulting document may be a resource for various government and non-government agencies.**

The people of the Yukon have accepted the message and much of the initiative has been at the grass roots level. The Government of British Columbia would be wise to follow suit and hope that the message catches on quickly. British Columbia lags behind and does not have the time to permit a gradual acceptance.

#### **4.0) THE NRAHTA EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

This package will be built on the adopted Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly principles and will be aimed at teaching guides, outfitters and operators already in the field. These people are the conduits of knowledge that can be passed on to the wider population. There needs to be an awareness that guides are working by best practice standards. To ensure that the quality of the tourism experience meets the demands of the client, owners of outfitting operations must support the program.

#### **4.1) Program to Train the Guides, Outfitters and Operators**

##### Aims of the Program

The program to educate the guides and outfitters will cover three areas.

- It will teach the Leave No Trace principles of low impact recreation experiences.
- It will demonstrate the Tread Lightly message of responsible use.
- It will examine the tourist expectations when on a guided trip.

The guides, outfitters and operators must be able to demonstrate and explain the Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly practices with which they are familiar and use on a continual basis. Tourists now expect that best practices be implemented at all times though they may not be fully aware of what this requires. It is important for the operators to demonstrate correct techniques performed to exacting standards. Many eco-tourists will recommend quality outfitters but will not refer others when the experience falls short of their expectations. Clients often take a guided trip to gain confidence and learn how to lead their own trips with friends. It will be important to set a good example.

The Tread Lightly message is aimed at the mechanically transported outdoor recreationists. The Leave No Trace message is aimed at the self-propelled outdoor recreationists. The messages may be directed at different audiences but they convey similar information. In the Tread Lightly *Guide to Responsible Trail Biking*, the Leave No Trace principles are printed just as they would be found in a Leave No Trace booklet. The opportunity exists in British Columbia to combine the two messages and develop an overall strategy that makes protecting the environment the priority. The outfitters must be able to adapt and deliver either message in their discussion with clients.

##### **4.1.1) The Leave No Trace Principles**

(Source: Leave No Trace documents)

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

##### **4.1.2) The Tread Lightly Principles** (Source: Tread Lightly documents)

**T**Travel and recreate with minimum impact

**R**espect the Environment and the Rights of Others

**E**ducate Yourself, Plan and Prepare Before You Go

**A**llow for future use of the outdoors, leave it better than you found it

**D**iscover the rewards of responsible recreation

The messages are similar. It becomes a matter of past experience to determine what values will be applied.

- Determine what your group is interested in and the type of trip they are on. The operators and outfitters will have to adapt the message.

#### **4.2) The Components of the Training Program**

The guides, outfitters and operators will learn the following from this training course. They will then be able to demonstrate and discuss the principles of the program. This is not intended to be a complete and comprehensive list. The skill development is not specific to any particular activity that guides may lead clients on. The graduates need a willingness to learn and the desire to improve skills must be an ongoing commitment.

##### **1. Demonstrate Local Knowledge**

- Environmental Issues - a connection to the land must be exhibited
- History, geography, flora & fauna
- How ecotourism supports local business
- How benefits accrue to parks and/or conservation efforts
- Discuss importance of hunting to the region

The purpose is to enable the guides to answer a wide range of questions which will be posed by a diverse clientele.

##### **2. Developing People Skills and Assessing Participants Skills**

- Put the group at ease and attain their cooperation
- Experiential games - tell them if there will be "lessons"
- Encourage experienced group members to pass on their skills
- Ensure that new people learn and contribute
- Discuss the importance of a cohesive and cooperative group

The purpose will be to give the operators the ability to size up groups. Many variables will occur when a group of strangers becomes dependent upon each other -- especially in a wilderness setting. Managing people can bring many challenges.

##### **3. Discussion of Plans and Options for Trips**

- Route selection – map and compass techniques
- Active days to cover ground vs. light days to acclimatize
- Preparation & Packing – how to distribute the weight load
- If sharing supplies- who is responsible for the group gear (i.e. first aid kit)
- Responsible use of any form of mechanized transport to be used (include discussions about getting to the trail -- even hikers need cars)

The purpose will be to encourage outfitters to think about involving the entire group in the decision making process. Can choices be made or are routes fixed? The route will vary, depending on conditions or terrain. Greater participation will provide the client with a better understanding and appreciate for the many factors that influence trip decisions. Participants probably used roads and vehicles to get to trail head could provide

interesting or difficult discussion. Communication skills and people management skills will be gained.

#### **4. Demonstrations and Proof of Preparedness**

- Talk about filing trip plans prior to departure and adhering to them
- What will be done in the event of an emergency?
- There is a Plan B! – making the best of any circumstance
- Could simulate a Search & Rescue and discuss implications

The purpose will be to inform guides that a particular level of planning is required. It is important to be alert and ready. Clients must realize how far removed they are from help while in the wilderness. Preparation to survive adverse conditions must be understood.

#### **5. Throughout the trip the TL and LNT Principles will be evident**

- How to work these into discussion
- How to demonstrate – lead by example – not lecturing
- When to make a lesson of a principle:
- Digging a cat hole - disposal of human waste and waste water
- Trail erosion and trampling by boots, tires and hooves
- Selecting a site, setting up camp, minimizing camp traffic

The purpose will be for the guide to pass on the critical message of how much effect even minimum human impact does have on the wilderness. Leaving the wilderness better than when the group arrived is the ideal.

#### **6. Post Trip Evaluation - The Critical Step - Learning from the Shared Experience and Applying it to Future Trips**

- Were the controllable factors successfully managed?
- Were the uncontrollable factors understood as to how they impacted the trip, and what to prepare for in the future?
- Examine what did or did not work
- Did the client's ability match the demands of the trip?
- What was useful gear, what was excess, what was inappropriate?
- Were TL or LNT principles understood?
- Encourage writing in a journal at the end of the day

The purpose of this is to teach operators how to wrap-up a trip. Operators will assess whether the elements of the pre-planning were achieved and if the experience met the expectations of the client. The use of people skills will be critical again at this point.

The course will recognize the knowledge of the guides and raise it to a new level. It will challenge them to rethink their methods and realize how their clients think. They will also be provided with direction to go for more resource material. Support must come from their employers who will create the culture or mindset that ecotourism practices are good for business and the stewardship of the land.

The recommended reading list must include useful books such as:

- *Soft Paths* by Bruce Hampton & David Cole
- *Outdoor Leadership* by John Graham
- *Wild Country Companion* by Will Harmon
- *Adventure Education* by John C. Miles & Simon Priest

This is the beginning of an essential reading collection that provides valuable insight on the subject of minimum impact recreation and people skills. Equipped with this much valuable information, any guide can have the confidence to put the skills into action and provide clients with an excellent backcountry experience.

The above package of components discusses some basic elements of guide training. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list, merely a sample. A wide selection of essential skills is covered in greater depth by books listed in the recommended readings. LNT has an Educational Review Committee that is comprised of knowledgeable and experienced people from many agencies. The wisdom of this group of people contributes to broadening the scope and application of the LNT message.

**It is recommended the NRAHTA to expand the scope of the training course to include the development of a pool of local experts to form a "Northern Rockies Educational Review Committee".**

This group could integrate more sensitive issues into the training such as a First Nations component, biodiversity, local history and hunting and sport-fishing interests. In addition, the committee could also advise in the education of management.

#### **4.3) Delivery of the Training Program**

The plan will be to recruit two people from the North Peace region who are knowledgeable about the local situation and capable of demonstrating outdoor leadership skills with documented trip experience. The trainers will be sent on a LNT Masters Course to gain the valuable skills that will enhance their teaching abilities. TL currently does not have courses ready to "train the trainers" but courses are being developed and should be available sometime during 2000. In the meantime, TL will be available to help as much as possible. Throughout this current research, the contacts at both TL and LNT have been accessible and encouraging. Names of these and other contacts are in the appendix.

The NOLS and LNT programs are recognized leaders in this field with a solid background and a thorough follow-up networking capacity to ensure that the trainers remain leaders. LNT operates two courses for Masters and Trainers. The *Master Course* is a five-day version for people who are actively teaching backcountry skills and providing information to the public. The *Trainer Course* is a condensed two-day version which covers the LNT principles and techniques for passing on the message to public lands agency personnel and visitors to public lands. These courses have significantly influenced the suggested content of the NRAHTA course.

(Source: [www.lnt.org/Masters/Course\\_Dates.html](http://www.lnt.org/Masters/Course_Dates.html))

The NRAHTA course will be based on the six sections as outlined above. As part of their duties, the trainers will further develop and refine the overall components of the course. Through contact with the NRERC, LNT Masters Network, all possible local agencies and practical field application of the program recommendations and adaptations can be made.

The trainers will be hired and retained on a contract to deliver a minimum number of training courses to guides and outfitters in the Northern Rockies region. NRAHTA will work to set up field workshops with the owners and operators of outfitting businesses through the delivery of an "Accreditation Program" (to be discussed later).

## **5.0) MANAGEMENT LITERATURE FOR ECO-OPERATING PRACTICE**

The essential models for management to build on are The Ecotourism Society's Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators and Conservation International's Ecotourism Goals and Objectives. These plans have been established by knowledgeable people and have been put into practice. These models have been applied in developing countries in tropical locations. Relevant material for a northern setting can be extracted from the studies. The message these non-governmental agencies advocate is that tourism can diversify economies, create jobs and bring money into the communities. The stakeholders must work within an established network and acknowledge cumulative effects of regional and national plans. Tourism can be very damaging if unplanned, under-financed or unsuited to the environment.

### **5.1) The Ecotourism Society**

(Source: [www.ecotourism.org](http://www.ecotourism.org))

#### **5.1.1) The Ecotourism Society's Guidelines for Nature Tour Operators**

The guidelines cover four areas:

- I) Predeparture Programs for Visitors
- II) Guiding Programs
  - General Principles
  - Prevention of Environmental Impacts
  - Prevention of Cultural Impacts
- III) Monitoring Programs
  - Prevention of Accumulated Impacts of Tourism
- IV) Management Programs
  - Prevention of Nature Tour Company Impacts
  - Training
  - Conservation Contribution Program
  - Local Employment and Jobs Program
  - Local Accommodation Check List



## **5.2) Conservation International**

(Source: [www.ecotour.org](http://www.ecotour.org))

### **5.2.1) The Conservation International Goals and Objectives**

1. The Ecotourism Development Plan
2. International Marketing
3. Awareness Building
4. Strategic Partnerships
5. Sustainable Resort Development

Extensive work done by the Ecotourism Society and Conservation International is aimed at achieving positive results in the developing world. There is a significant amount of practical information that can help develop a management strategy for the Northern Rockies. Contact names and website addresses are provided in the reference section.

**It is recommended that NRAHTA to respond to the interest expressed by both the Ecotourism Society and the Conservation International Organization and develop working relationships that will aid in research of information that can be applied to local solutions.**

## **5.3) Australia's National Strategy on Ecotourism Promotion**

The document that was instrumental in the elevation of tourism to its level of focus was, *"Two Way Track: Biodiversity Conservation and Ecotourism: an investigation of linkages, mutual benefits and future opportunities"*. This study is ambitious and comprehensive. It must be read by anyone with the aim of elevating tourism as an equal partner in Resource Management decision making. It demonstrates why Australia has taken the lead and provides many of the models referred to in this report.

(Source: ([http://erin.gov.au/life/general\\_info/biodivser\\_5/two\\_con.html](http://erin.gov.au/life/general_info/biodivser_5/two_con.html)))

Australia's promotion of eco-tourism is thorough and encompasses the national and individual state levels. The current marketing slogan to promote travel to Australia is revealing.

### ***"Worth Looking At, Worth Looking After"***

The pictures on the website highlight the natural beauty of Australia and the subliminal message is that these resources need to be cared for if they are to be around to draw people to visit. The Website provides a page on "Ecotips" for travelers to Australia and encourages them to ask tour operators about their promotion of policies and practices. Additional tips include:

- Work only with those companies which have a commitment to caring for the environment
- Take steps to protect natural places from the impact of their operations
- Treat their waste in environmentally friendly ways and recycle wherever possible
- Minimize their use of water and energy

The list continues with more valuable tips to ensure that visitors minimize their impact while enjoying their holiday:

- Obtain pre- departure knowledge
- What to pack/what not to pack
- Advice on cultural differences
- How visitors can contribute to the local economy
- How to advise operators they approve of their environmental standards

The consumers are prepared, have expectations and will be making judgements about the operators. Operators of ecotourism businesses in British Columbia can respond to information by doing their own self-promotion. The scale of operations of most ecotourism businesses is small and there is little chance that they can sell their tours through traditional methods such as travel agents. It is critical that the Internet is a promotional tool. A well-designed site can provide an even greater reach worldwide than Supernatural British Columbia promotional vehicles.

### **5.3.1) The Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA)**

The Ecotourism Association of Australia (EAA) operates as a non-governmental agency and provides similar information for the traveller and the operator. They issue a set of "*Guidelines for Ecotourists*" similar to those that the Government of Australia provides. They also provide a "*Code of Practice for Operators*". This can be used to prepare operators to meet and exceed tourists expectations. The twenty-point list covers topics such as:

- Strengthening the conservation effort and enhancing the natural integrity of places visited
- Efficiency in the use of natural resources (water, energy)
- Networking with other stakeholders (particularly those in the local area) to keep each other informed of developments
- Supporting eco-tourism education / training for guides and managers
- Maximizing the quality of experience for hosts and guests

### **5.3.2) EAA's National Ecotourism Accreditation Program NEAP**

The amount of determined effort that is taking place in Australia to ensure that guests are informed, guides are prepared and that all impact to the places visited is as minimal as possible sets Australia ahead of most destinations. The commitment is carried even further with the launching of the National Ecotourism Accreditation Program by the EAA. The program is structured around eight ideals.

1. Focus on experiencing natural areas in ways which lead to greater understanding and appreciation
2. Integrate opportunities to understand natural areas into each experience
3. Represent best practice for ecologically sustainable tourism
4. Proactively contribute to the conservation of natural areas
5. Provide constructive ongoing contributions to local communities
6. Be sensitive to different cultures, especially indigenous culture
7. Consistently meet client expectations
8. Marketing is accurate and leads to realistic expectations

The Accreditation Program has a standard and advanced component. Both have identifiable icons to create awareness and recognition. *"To achieve Ecotourism Accreditation, operators must demonstrate that their products fulfill 100% of the applicable core criteria under each principle. To achieve Advanced Accreditation, products must meet a further 80% (at least) of the applicable bonus criteria. Operators may also provide examples of innovative best practice".*

(Source: <http://kiskeya-alternative.org/certif/refer-certif-eng.html> pg. 3,4)

The credibility of the program is maintained through:

- Referee checks at time of application
- A system of annual paper audits
- Random physical audits

#### **5.4) Ecotourism Planning in Australia – Focus on Queensland**

For this report it will be practical to look at how one region in particular is developing ecotourism in its backyard. Queensland, Australia provides an excellent example. All of the Australian states have embraced ecotourism and developed plans, which are comprehensive and forward thinking. Although this framework is an excellent beginning, the challenge will be to implement the plans. A general overview follows to give a sense of the comprehensiveness of the Australian process.

##### **5.4.1) Queensland Environmental Tourism Plan**

(Source: <http://www.tg.comm.au/qep/qep.html>)

###### Overview of the Plan

- The Planning Process
- Implementation Responsibilities

###### Strategic Overview of Ecotourism

- Definitions of Ecotourism
- Styles of Ecotourism
- Ecotourism Stakeholders
- Ecotourism Markets
- Economic Benefits
- Regional Opportunities

###### Vision and Principles of the Plan

- Rationale behind the four objectives and seven strategies

###### The Implementation of the Strategies

- 36 actions are identified

###### Background Information on Specific Topics

- Ecotourism Principles & Stakeholder Roles
- Biogeographic Regions
- Management and Coordination
- Information for Ecotourism Planning

Queensland's strategy is ambitious. To debate whether it can be implemented and speculate on its effectiveness is something that a competing region cannot do. The region, be it Northeastern BC or the province as a whole must analyze where it stands with respect to local issues, legislation and framework and take action.

#### **5.4.2) Relating Queensland's Ecotourism Plan to British Columbia**

The Queensland ecotourism plan can provide a theoretical model. The plan recognizes the importance of tourism operators having to form a "critical mass" to be represented at the stakeholder discussion tables. The value of tourism, specifically ecotourism, must be presented in a way that the people of Northeastern BC will understand and that through the protection of natural areas, conservation and development can occur simultaneously. This can lead to sustainability and a more diverse economy in which tourism plays a significant role.

#### **5.5) Applicable Management Tools**

Two academic articles provide practical stepping stones for ensuring that any region can adopt a local solution for balancing the "contrary" goals of conservation and protection. A 1995 document by Brian Goodall *"Environmental Audit: A tool for assessing the environmental performance of tourism firms"* pertains more to mass tourism although the principles could be applied to ecotourism since the bottom line is based on self regulatory efforts. Another document, published in January 1999, provides a framework that is to be applied to an ecotourism case study. Based on a setting in Indonesia, the study results have been published in the December 1999 issue of *Tourism Management*. Entitled *"Ecotourism: towards congruence between theory and practice"* this article will provide sufficient reference material.

##### **5.5.1) Environmental Auditing**

The practicality of Goodall's article is that, despite the focus on larger tourism chains and corporations, it recognizes tourism as a consumptive activity within the setting or environment. The author gets down to the business of discussing the importance of the environmental audit as a tool without the preamble of definitions. Sustainability is simply defined as "duty of care", and "environmental auditing" is a borrowed concept from the manufacturing industry. Describing the process as one of "self regulation", the author discusses what might prompt a tourism firm to voluntarily adopt the environmental audit:

- Cost savings from more efficient use of resources and minimization of wastes
- Identifying environmental problems before they become liabilities
- Developing benchmarks of good environmental practice
- An improved image for the business
- Marketing advantage – consumer acceptance
- Gaining the confidence of customers and communities

There is plenty of applicable material within the article for this to be part of NRAHTA's strategy to encourage ecotourism companies to incorporate this practice within the scope of their business. A related article that applies more of the audit process at the

ecotourism level is "*Best Practice Environmental Management and the Tourism Industry*" by John J. Pigram. This is an Australian study, which introduces a few practical concepts and reviews case examples.

### **5.5.2) Ecotourism – Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice**

The authors, Ross and Wall, discuss ecotourism and how it is "considered to be a potential strategy to support conservation of natural ecosystems while at the same time promoting sustainable local development". They go on to point out how ecotourism is advocated in the absence of practical conditions under which it may be promoted, managed and evaluated. The authors are also considerate of the reality that not all local citizens welcome tourism and that the resource base must provide for various competing interests. The flow charts and frameworks they developed, demonstrate the inter-relationship between Tourism – Biological Diversity – Local Populations. While the flow charts are simple they are well explained and apply to the Muskwa-Kechika area. Since the tourism industry of Northeastern British Columbia is in the developmental stage, the acceptance of a new program is likely to be well received.

### **5.6) Applying the Relevant Models in the Muskwa-Kechika**

The previously mentioned articles are relevant for the program that NRAHTA desires to implement through the Education of Management. It also demonstrates how untested much of this research is. It remains fieldwork and the domain of academic journals. Opportunity exists to promote this work at an academic level and apply Muskwa-Kechika funding to a truly local solution. This program can be developed in stages and applied in progress. It is imperative to act now rather than wait for models to arise elsewhere.

There may be ready support for this kind of program. However, if the program is to succeed the commercial operators and other users of the MK must embrace the concept of applying and promoting Leave No Trace principles. To begin the process, it would be wise to develop a dialogue and seek input from user groups. The following elements could be addressed:

- Analysis of suggested programs
- Recommendation of an outline of requirements for standards of operation
- Identification of how the program will benefit the operators
- Recommendation of a system of recognition to ensure best practice standards
- Procedure for maintaining credibility of the program
- Procedures for evaluation and retraining

By initiating the Wilderness Host Program, our "product or location" will be on the *map* and the consumers who are leading the demand for a greener product can become an influential ally in advancing the program.

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## **Contacts:**

The following is a list of informational contacts. Many were quick to reply and are interested in the development of this project

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### **Worldwide Web Pages:**

<http://www.int.org> Leave No Trace

<http://www.treadlightly.org> Tread Lightly

<http://orcbc.bc.ca> Outdoor Recreation Council of BC

<http://ecotourism.org> The Ecotourism Society

<http://www.environment.gov.au/index.html> Environment Australia

<http://www.environment.gov.au/epcg/esd/nscsd/nscsd.html> Australia's National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development

<http://www.bigvolcano.com.au/ercentre/ercpage.htm> Ecotourism Resource Centre

<http://www.anca.gov.au/> Environment Australia

<http://www.conservation.org/> Conservation International

<http://www.greenglobe.org/> Green Globe

<http://www.podi.com/ecosource/ecotour/research/policy.html> Ecotourism Policy – Berlin Declaration on Biological Diversity and Sustainable Tourism  
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[http://www.erin.gov.au/life/general\\_info/biodivser\\_5/two\\_con.html](http://www.erin.gov.au/life/general_info/biodivser_5/two_con.html) Two Way Track – an essential document



