



## District of Squamish - Community Tourism Plan

*December, 2006*

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## Executive Summary

The following community tourism plan for the District of Squamish including the region from Britannia Beach to Brackendale provides recommendations to address the community's tourism priorities identified with tourism stakeholders in February of 2006. Specifically, ready to implement recommendations have been made as follows:

- To establish a destination marketing organization (DMO) for the District of Squamish that will serve as a focal point for marketing and sales efforts designed to increase visitation and spending;
- To fund this organization initially through a request for Phase I UBCM funds allocated to the District of Squamish and subsequently through a combination of funds from local government, industry stakeholders, and possibly the implementation of the 2% Additional Hotel Room Tax;
- To govern this organization as a division of the Squamish Sustainability Corporation (SSC) and to utilize existing staff resources and facilities in order to ensure maximum resources are made available for marketing/sales efforts;
- To establish a Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) to work closely with staff and recommend to the SSC Board an annual marketing/sales strategy and allocation of resources and to be accountable to this Board for the results of marketing/sales programs implemented;
- To execute targeted marketing and sales strategies in the first year of operations and to assess the results of these strategies against a baseline of quantifiable measures including Visitor Centre numbers, bookings, web statistics and accommodation sector occupancy/average daily rate associated with tourism stays.

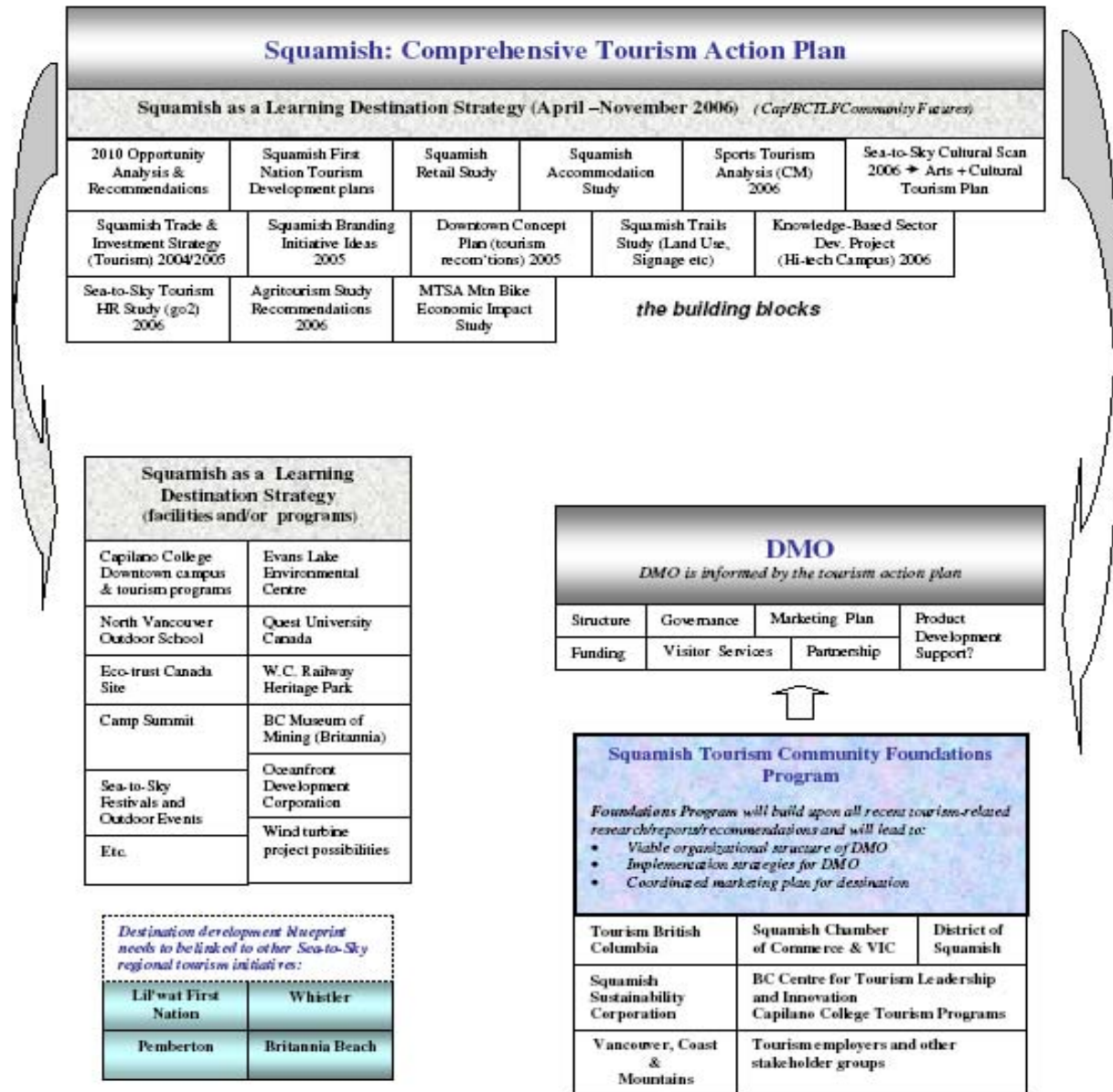
## Process and Methodology

The District of Squamish is experiencing tremendous growth and rejuvenation. The development of a community tourism plan is but one of many initiatives currently underway that are designed to culminate in a comprehensive 'destination development strategy'. These initiatives are dynamic and constantly changing, however, they currently included the following components:

*An Exemplary Model: Towards a Coordinated Approach to Destination Development in Squamish*

Provincial host institution:

**DRAFT**



This community tourism plan for The District of Squamish including the area from Brackendale to Britannia Beach summarizes the conclusions and implications developed during the completion of a comprehensive tourism situation analysis. It also presents a model for the formation of a destination marketing organization along with objectives, strategies, and specific tactics to achieve a set of identified tourism goals. Evaluation methods to track the objectives, strategies, and tactics are listed and estimated budget amounts for each activity are provided.

## Background

The District of Squamish and surrounding area from Brackendale to Britannia Beach has embarked upon a tourism planning initiative through Tourism British Columbia's Community Tourism Foundations program. This program provides resources to assist communities in developing a comprehensive tourism plan. These resources include the services of professional facilitators to assist in the planning process. Suzanne Denbak of Cadence Strategies was given the assignment of working with the Squamish Sustainability Corporation and a group of local tourism stakeholders in order to prepare a comprehensive tourism plan for the Squamish area that encompasses both destination development and market development. The program was managed, at the local level, by Lesley Weeks of the Squamish Sustainability Corporation and assisted by the Squamish Chamber of Commerce and the BC Centre for Tourism Leadership & Innovation.

The planning process started with a tour of the area and its attractions by the facilitator and an initial meeting that was held on February 22, 2006. Participants in this initial meeting were identified as organized groups who are representative of the several tourism sectors in Squamish. For the initial meeting, attendance included representatives from the Squamish Sustainability Corporation, Squamish Adventure Centre, BC Centre for Tourism, Leadership and Innovation, Squamish Chamber of Commerce, District of Squamish, Visitor Information Centre, Squamish Nation, Squamish Arts Council and the Squamish Town Centre Association. A diverse range of tourism and recreation interests were represented. The initial meeting identified the participants' expectations of the Community Tourism Foundation program and provided direction as to local tourism priorities that would form the basis of the project work plan. In recognition of the need to engage with a broader group of tourism stakeholders, additional sector based meetings were held on April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 2006. In total, four sector meetings were held with the accommodation sector, the activities/attractions sector, the retail/restaurant sector and arts, special events and other. In order to ensure as many stakeholders as possible were contacted, the current business license listings with the District of Squamish were reviewed in addition to the Chamber of Commerce member directory and were used to compile a contact list of stakeholders. An invitation was sent out to all identified stakeholders, ads were placed for two weeks in the local community newspaper, a notice in the Chamber of Commerce weekly newsletter to its members and a media release requesting interested parties to participate in the upcoming meetings was issued.

Following the stakeholder sector meetings, all participants were asked if they were interested in participating on a Tourism Project Steering Committee to help drive the process. A number of people responded to the request and formed a Tourism Project Steering Committee with representation secured from all tourism sectors.

With this wealth of stakeholder input a proposed work plan for the Community Tourism Foundations program was drafted (Appendix B) that addressed the following identified priorities:

### **Priorities for the Community Tourism Foundations program:**

All participants articulated the priorities for the Community Tourism Foundations program with a great deal of consistency. The creation of a well-funded, appropriately governed destination marketing organization (DMO) is a priority along with the development of targeted marketing and sales strategies to promote Squamish as a destination and ultimately to increase visitation and spending.

There is also a strong desire to improve knowledge of the tourism industry amongst local residents, to share information about products, services and events and to create a sense of community pride, mutual respect and local ambassadors.

Strong concern was voiced over a number of product development needs from immediate needs for trail maintenance, signage and guides to longer-term concerns over capacity and use guidelines.

In summary, recognizing the existence of limited resources, the priorities for the Community Tourism Foundation program were agreed to be:

- Create a Squamish Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) including all foundational elements: funding, organization & governance model so that this organization functions and achieves its mandate regardless of transitory involvement of individuals. The organization should have paid staff, a clear mandate and a model to fairly represent tourism stakeholders. The DMO should become an effective vehicle for cooperation and coordination.
- Create marketing strategies for Squamish including identification of target markets, determination of unique selling proposition, brand and key messages. A strong focus on web presence should be considered as should guides, directories and event calendars in order to build awareness of Squamish as a destination.
- Estimate the value of tourism to Squamish and use this to educate and communicate with the community at large. Generate mutual respect, understanding for the industry and enhance local product knowledge and pride. Promote tourism as an industry/career for Squamish youth.
- Secure some ‘quick wins’ – consider additional content for the Visitor Centre such as tear sheets for visitors; consider training programs.

Participants on the Project Steering Committee demonstrated their commitment to the process and the outcomes of the work plan by co-signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Tourism British Columbia (Appendix A).

A planning session was held on June 15, 2006 in which Squamish’s tourism situation analysis was reviewed and marketing priorities were set for the tourism plan including a discussion of the need for a destination marketing organization. A subsequent planning meeting was held on August 3, 2006 to confirm the vision, mission and guiding principles of this new destination marketing organization, known as Tourism Squamish, to establish a funding and governance model and to further refine marketing and sales priority markets and strategies.

Detailed marketing and sales strategies and an implementation plan were developed by a sub-committee over the months of August and September and were distributed to the larger group of stakeholders for their review and comment in October. A final meeting of stakeholders occurred on November 3, 2006 to revisit and confirm support for the entire community tourism plan and to discuss next steps.

Minutes from these meetings along with copies of PowerPoint presentations if applicable are found along with a list of attendees in the Appendices to this report.

Tourism British Columbia oversaw this project working together with the facilitator and a core group of local tourism stakeholders. This voluntary Tourism Project Steering Committee contributed their ideas, experience and wisdom in the development of this plan and their efforts are acknowledged and greatly appreciated. The members of the Project Steering Committee were:

Al Price	Arts Council
Bob Kusch	District of Squamish/Squamish Sustainability Corporation
Carol Watts	BC Museum of Mining
Christine Baker	Squamish Nation
Colleen Myers	The Hive
Dan McRae	District of Squamish/Squamish Sustainability Corporation
Donna Wall	Downtown Squamish BIA
Geoff Park	Camp Summit
Jen Reilly	Wild Rock Adventures
Kim Hood	Visitor Services Manager
Lesley Weeks	Squamish Sustainability Corporation
Meredith Hitchmough	Squamish Sustainability Corporation
Murray Seward	Canadian Outback Adventures

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Scott McQuade	Oceanport Hotel & Restaurant
Tim Schoahs	BC Centre for Tourism Leadership & Innovation
Todd Pope	Trails Coordinator District of Squamish
Toran Savjord	Quest University

## *A Vision for Tourism in Squamish*

The community of Squamish is in transition. There is a growing recognition of the importance of tourism as one element of a strong and vibrant economic base. However, Squamish does not intend to be a one-industry town and is also actively pursuing education/learning institutions, high tech firms and continues to participate in the forestry industry. Tourism Project Steering Committee participants' best summarized the vision for tourism in Squamish as:

**“Strong Tourism Economy within a Strong Economic Mix”**

## *Key Findings of Squamish’s Situation Analysis*

### **Squamish’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

On April 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> 2006 a series of four meetings were held with more than 50 tourism stakeholders representing the accommodation, retail, activities/attractions, food/beverage and special events sectors. A list of attendees is included in Appendix K.

The following summarizes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with Squamish as a tourism destination that were noted. A more detailed report is included in Appendix D:

#### **Strengths:**

Squamish’s strengths can be summarized as outstanding natural beauty, a wealth of outdoor recreation options for all levels of fitness/skill and a growing arts, cultural, heritage and learning and education offering. Its relatively easy access and proximity to major markets provide opportunity to target regional markets as well as those traveling to Whistler but seeking other complimentary experiences. The majority of these strengths are product related as very little concerted marketing has occurred to promote Squamish as a destination.

#### **Weaknesses:**

While there are many world-class products as noted above, Squamish’s weaknesses are highlighted by a significant number of gaps in the product offerings that affect the overall destination experience. These gaps range from fundamentals like general visual appeal, signage, trail guides/maps and consistency of customer service to areas requiring more significant investment such as accommodation facilities, nightly entertainment, the oceanfront and downtown redevelopment and opportunities to improve local shopping and dining.

From a marketing perspective, Squamish lacks a clear brand and associated brand messaging and many question the appropriateness of the tag line ‘Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada’ given the many infrastructure investments required to achieve this stature and given the emerging

arts/culture/heritage offerings. As well, Squamish suffers from a legacy of perceptions regarding its safety, its poverty and its general lack of appeal. The absence of an appropriately funded and well-managed destination marketing organization is also viewed as a current weakness.

Like many communities in British Columbia, local residents do not uniformly understand the value of tourism and there is some resentment towards the tourism industry from those employed or formerly employed in traditional resource extraction industries. Local government's decisions with regard to land use and allocation of resources are perceived by some to lack commitment to a tourism economy.

### **Opportunities:**

The primary opportunities identified can also be categorized as either related to marketing or product development. The most significant marketing opportunity relates to the formation of a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) that will take the lead in promoting Squamish as a destination. This DMO will serve as a catalyst to cooperation and will coordinate destination-marketing efforts. Its role is anticipated to include identifying target markets, developing the Squamish brand and associated brand messages and executing targeted promotions including web presence, packaging, and relationships with tour operators, offering familiarization tours, etc.

The DMO is also anticipated to play a role in overall destination development, acting as a catalyst to resolve current product gaps. The opportunities within product development include many significant investments including a public art gallery, additional meeting space, infrastructure to support sports tourism, as well as improvements to the mix of accommodation, shopping and dining/entertainment. The DMO can draw on and receive support from the *Squamish: A Learning Destination* strategy, which analyses learning packages as a component of tourism in Squamish. Also contributing to overall destination development is the potential for a *Regional Heritage & Cultural Interpretation* strategy which ties together the numerous "stories" of Squamish and the Sea-to-Sky corridor – outdoor recreation, logging, mining, First Nations etc.

The opportunity to communicate, inform and educate the local population about the value of tourism, the product offerings available in Squamish and ideally to create local ambassadors is also seen as an opportunity and the DMO is perceived to have a role in creating a forum for sharing this information.

**Threats:**

Threats to the creation of a sustainable tourism economy in Squamish revolve primarily around the product and concerns over its capacity. As well, external factors such as exchange rate, border crossings and more aggressive value offerings in Whistler are viewed as threats to the successful development of a sustainable tourism economy in Squamish.

**Greatest Tourism Opportunities Based Upon Market Research**

The Project Steering Committee reviewed a wide range of market intelligence provided by Tourism British Columbia. The detailed reports are included in Appendix G. Based upon an assessment of this market research and upon an understanding of Squamish’s unique product strengths and weaknesses, the Tourism Project Steering Committee identified the following immediate tourism opportunities:

Market/Experience	Outdoor (Soft) Experiences*	Outdoor (Hard) Experiences	Eagle Viewing	Heritage – Mining, Rail	Shop & Dine	Festivals	Get away	Education Field Trips
Lower Mainland Leisure travelers	*	*	*	*		*	*	*
Lower Mainland/ Whistler conference travelers	*							*
Lower Mainland sports tournaments							*	
Vancouver Cruise passengers	*							
Whistler Day trips	*		*					
Whistler/ Pemberton residents					*			
Whistler seasonal workers	*	*						
BC residents 18-39 yrs	*	*						
United Kingdom	*							
Germany/Austria/Switzerland	*							
Australia/New Zealand	*	*						
Pacific Northwest boomers			*					
School Boards/ ESL				*				
Visiting Friends/ Relatives	*				*	*		
Bus tours			*					
Parents of children participating in education programs	*				*			
Festival/ Event Attendees (stay extensions)	*		*	*	*			

\* Outdoor experiences varies by season and includes walking, hiking, biking, climbing, windsurfing, kayaking, rafting, etc.

It was recognized that in future there will be significant additional tourism opportunities to be pursued related to the downtown revitalization, the growing learning/educational product available in Squamish and other planned improvements such as the retail strategy. However, the Committee wished to focus on markets and products that could be marketed immediately in order to generate incremental visitation to Squamish.

## The Need for a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)

The analysis of Squamish's strengths combined with the identification of the area's greatest tourism opportunities, confirmed the previously identified need for a central organization to take the lead role in destination marketing and sales. Many members of the Tourism Project Steering Committee have understood this need for some time and recognized that the support and timing for this current initiative was ideal to deliver on the priority set-up of the new destination marketing structure. This organization will play a pivotal role in defining the Squamish brand,

its key competitive advantages and core messages to be taken out consistently to target markets. It will also serve as a coordinating body ensuring that its efforts and the effort of local tourism businesses are fully leveraged with regional and provincial tourism marketing programs offered through Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and Tourism British Columbia.

In this coordinating role, it will develop 'easy to buy' packages for target markets that offer a range of accommodation, activities and dining/shopping options and thereby unify the individual efforts of tourism entrepreneurs and will offer these packages in a variety of market specific media. This coordinating role is ever more vital as specific opportunities associated with the upcoming 2010 Winter Olympic Games arise. Specifically, the coordination of community vignettes, hosting of media, and the filming of television ready footage for use by the media are a significant Olympic opportunities for Squamish that should be coordinated by the new DMO.

Equally importantly, the DMO will measure progress against a defined set of quantifiable objectives and will report to its stakeholders on the results of its marketing and sales programs. This reporting will include the overall value of tourism to Squamish as a means of continually engaging with the broader community and building support and understanding of the industry.

There are many case studies of other communities who have successfully established destination marketing organizations and have secured incremental visitation as result. For example, Tourism Abbotsford has been pivotal in enabling Abbotsford to lead the Province in hotel revenue growth (2004 – 7%; 2005 – 5%). The official Tourism Abbotsford website hosts more than 125,000 unique visitors representing a 40% growth rate per year. Tourism Abbotsford has also effectively developed industry relationships with organizations such as Vancouver, Coast & Mountains, Tourism BC, the Canadian Tourism Commission, BC Sports Tourism Network, and the Lower Mainland Regional Tourism Roundtable. Examples of Tourism Abbotsford's sales and marketing milestones include: design, sale and production of the inaugural Abbotsford Travel Guide; development of the Fraser Valley Golf campaign – a regional 'golf & stay' program; launch of the Abbotsford Meeting & Events Planner web magazine; launch of the Abbotsford Arts, Culture & Heritage campaign and the launch of the Abbotsford Farm Circle Tour program.

## Best Practices for a Destination Marketing Organization

While the development of Squamish’s destination marketing organization, Tourism Squamish, reflects the unique interests and needs of local tourism stakeholders and the community at large, a number of best practices were considered in the development of the working model for the new organization.

These best practices include the following:

- ☑ **Market Knowledge:**
  - ☑ Comprehensive market research program – clear understanding of the market and its purchase drivers
  - ☑ Collective understanding of the value of tourism to the community including monitoring of results and trends
- ☑ **Branding:**
  - ☑ Clear understanding of unique competitive position in the marketplace
  - ☑ Clear and consistent messaging – umbrella brand for the resort experience
- ☑ **Funding:**
  - ☑ Stable and predictable level of funding
  - ☑ Sufficient level of funding
  - ☑ Effective leveraging and partnerships
- ☑ **Governance:**
  - ☑ Common vision and support for role of tourism within the community and local economy
  - ☑ Community Tourism Plan incorporated as a part of OCP or community economic development strategy
  - ☑ Committed, supportive and representative Board of Directors – broad base of representation
  - ☑ Clarity and agreement on the role of the Destination Marketing Organization – its priorities, its partners, its objectives and specific, measurable targets, its relationships/involvement with visitor services, product development, local Chamber of Commerce
- ☑ **Operations:**
  - ☑ High caliber team of marketing and sales professionals
  - ☑ Local business support for program direction and willingness to act together to achieve synergies – strong communications model
  - ☑ Effective and immediate monitoring mechanisms; quantifiable measures of success

## *Tourism Squamish*

The following model for Squamish’s new Destination Marketing Organization, Tourism Squamish, is recommended for immediate implementation:

### **Vision**

“Tourism Squamish acts as an ambassador and steward of our destination, promoting a healthy tourism sector in order to secure broad benefits for our community.”

### **Mission**

“Tourism Squamish works collaboratively with partners and leverages its resources effectively to execute strategic marketing, sales and customer service programs that deliver both more visitors and higher yield visitors to Squamish throughout the year. We provide industry leadership locally and we create awareness within our community of the value of tourism and the products and services that we offer to our visitors.”

### **Guiding Principles**

Tourism Squamish will conduct its business in a manner that is:

- Open and transparent - processes are open to public scrutiny; opportunities to be informed and provide input are made available and decisions and their rationale are known by all interested stakeholders;
- Accountable – measure a baseline + measure progress + report results
- Fair - stakeholders may not like all of Tourism Squamish’s decisions but they recognize the inherent fairness of the process and the outcome
- Sustainable – triple bottom line (socially / environmentally and fiscally responsible)
- Strategic – Tourism Squamish reads the market closely and crafts strategies that promote Squamish’s unique competitive position, brand and key messages in a disciplined and logical way; knee jerk responses that are ‘off strategy’ are avoided
- Industry supported – as evidenced by general support for organization and by participation in specific marketing/sales/service initiatives
- Customer focused - within the context of community values/vision, customer’s needs are a priority
- Collaborative – clear roles for each participating organization – supportive of each other- Tourism Squamish works together with other organizations and individuals and provides opportunities to participate in relevant DMO programs
- Unified - creative dialogue/debate encouraged but once a decision is made – all are supportive
- Action and results oriented

### Governance/Funding Model

The following governance and funding model for Tourism Squamish is recommended:

- Tourism Squamish be established to function as a division of the Squamish Sustainability Corporation (SSC) with staff reporting to the newly formed SSC Board
- Facilities and infrastructure at the Squamish Adventure Centre be utilized for office space, technology support, office services etc.
- Existing staff at the Adventure Centre to take lead responsibility for executing the agreed upon marketing and sales strategies for Tourism Squamish
- A Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) be formed to make recommendations to SSC staff / board and work closely with SSC staff to provide external tourism marketing insights and expertise. Together the TAC and staff would develop an annual sales and marketing plan/budget that would be recommended to the SSC Board
- TAC members would also work on various sub-committees providing input to a variety of specific tactical initiatives such as website development
- Core marketing and sales funding for Tourism Squamish be secured from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) through the first phase of the UBCM Community Tourism Program – for the first year of operation, a request for allocation of the UBCM funds of approx. \$100,000 to be made to Council in the winter of 2006/07. As this still represents a modest budget in a highly competitive marketplace, the UBCM funding will be leveraged and partnered to the maximum extent possible with other organizations such as Vancouver, Coast & Mountains and Tourism British Columbia
- Additional funding sources will continue to be pursued. Possible sources of funding to be further researched are the 2% Additional Hotel Room Tax (AHRT), a tourism services levy on business licenses and stakeholder based programs where businesses can participate on a fee basis -- it was noted that extensive outreach and communication efforts will be required for all these initiatives

The proposed model allows Tourism Squamish to launch quickly with broad industry support and an adequate (although not optimal) level of core marketing and sales funding for its first year of operation. It is hoped that with measurable success in its first year of operations that this level of funding support would continue to be available from the District of Squamish in future years.

Communication efforts regarding other sources of revenue should commence but the advantage of the proposed model is that it does not have to wait for these efforts to be successful before commencing the marketing/sales efforts of Tourism Squamish. The experience of other communities indicates that delays of up to several years can be expected if other sources of revenue must be secured first.

The Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) is an essential element of this model as it ensures that Tourism Squamish will be informed by the expertise of the private sector and supported by the local industry.

In order to participate as a member of the Tourism Advisory Committee, candidates should have strong tourism knowledge and expertise, and should demonstrate leadership in the community and the industry. The Tourism Advisory Committee should include broad representation across a number of tourism sectors including:

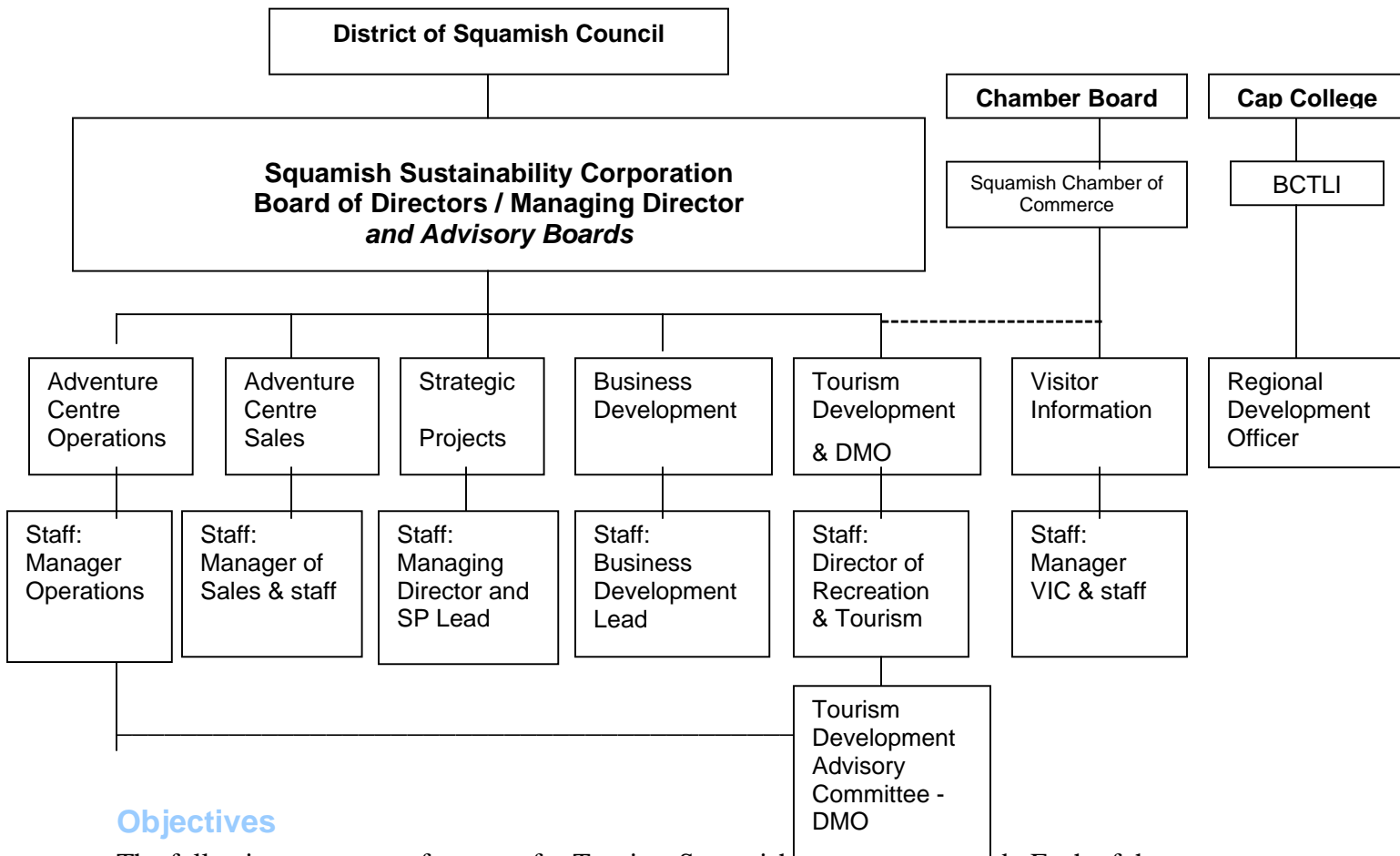
- Accommodation
- Activities
- Retail
- Events
- Learning/education
- Food/beverage
- Culture/arts
- First Nations/heritage

Further, members should represent a mix of older and newer businesses to share both the history of Squamish and bring fresh perspectives. It was agreed that the inaugural TAC would ideally be appointed by the SSC Board of Directors. In future, a system of sectoral voting will be established wherein businesses in specific sectors that participate in Tourism Squamish programs are eligible to vote for their representative on the TAC. A two year, initially staggered term was suggested to be appropriate.

The role of the Tourism Advisory Committee (TAC) was also discussed. It was agreed that its primary role be the development, along with staff, of a recommended annual marketing plan and budget for presentation to the SSC Board of Directors. The TAC will also play a vital role in the regular monitoring of program execution and program results, likely on a quarterly basis. TAC members will bring their market knowledge to the table and will liaise with other stakeholders within their sector in order to bring an even wider range of perspectives to the planning table. TAC members will also act as advocates and ambassadors for the organization throughout the community of Squamish.

TAC members will also be asked to participate in a variety of sub-committees in order to bring their expertise to bear on specific initiatives such as website development, production of guides and collateral materials, research and execution of possible funding sources (AHRT), flatsheets of things to do, etc.

Graphically, the proposed structure and relationships between the Squamish Sustainability Corporation, Tourism Squamish, the Chamber of Commerce, BC Centre for Tourism, Leadership and Innovation etc. can be depicted as follows:



## Objectives

The following measures of success for Tourism Squamish are recommended. Each of these measures requires a disciplined process for measurement, a baseline of where we are today and then regular monitoring and reporting of trends; progress etc. to the TAC and to the SSC Board:

- Value of tourism (model will be available through Tourism BC in the spring of 2007)
- Number of overnight stays (accommodation sector can participate in Tourism BC accommodation tracking survey)
- Average daily rate (accommodation sector can participate in Tourism BC accommodation tracking survey)
- Visitors to the Squamish Adventure Centre – day and overnight
- Bookings through the Squamish Adventure Centre
- Area of origin statistics; trends in new market development
- Ad tracking to measure specific program success – will require central reservations capacity
- Media coverage as measured by advertising equivalency
- Web statistics
- Return visitation – as measured through intercept surveys

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- Stakeholder participation in programs (measure of overall support for organization's efforts)
- Financial viability of organization
- Community support for tourism generally and Tourism Squamish specifically

The DMO can capitalize on the work and presence of Capilano College and the BCTLI in Squamish, both of whom have expressed interest in assisting with research, benchmarking and marketing.

### *Priority Markets/Products*

With the new Tourism Squamish as described above in place, the priority target markets/products that will yield immediate increases in visitation to Squamish have been identified as:

1. Lower Mainland Leisure Travelers – Outdoor Experiences
2. BC – 18-39 year old Travelers – Outdoor Experiences
3. Pacific Northwest – Getaways (featuring eagle viewing)
4. Lower Mainland families – Day trips and Getaways (featuring Railway/Mining heritage)
5. Whistler - Day trips

### *Strategies to Reach Priority Markets*

The following marketing and sales strategies have been identified:

#### **Marketing and Sales Strategies applicable to all markets:**

- Conduct market research in conjunction with Tourism BC to understand current awareness levels and perceptions of Squamish in target markets (Lower Mainland, PNW) and to identify purchase motivators.
- Undergo a research-based branding review to identify the unique brand attributes and key brand messages that should underpin all destination-marketing efforts.
- Engage a creative agency to translate these unique attributes and messages into a set of creative standards to be applied to all marketing and sales efforts (advertising, brochures, banners, website etc.)
- Complete the design and development of the official Squamish website for visitors.
- Acquire photography rights/create photography library for use on website, in collateral, in media relations etc.
- Design and produce a destination 'lure' brochure featuring Squamish activities/accommodations etc.

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- Participate in a number of general awareness building campaigns e.g. advertise in Vancouver Coast & Mountains regional guide, Tourism BC Outdoor Adventure Guide etc.

Due to resource limitations, these strategies will be phased in over several years as indicated in the more detailed marketing and sales plan included as Appendix G.

**Marketing and Sales Strategies applicable in specific markets:**

**Lower Mainland – Outdoor Experiences target market:**

- This market requires two distinct foci – one is product specific for those enthusiasts that are specifically interested in a single product or experience (Group A) and another is for those travelers seeking a getaway with a variety of experiences (Group B)
- Group A will be interested in one of: mountain biking, rock climbing, wind surfing/ kite boarding, whitewater kayaking, whitewater rafting
- Group B will be interested in a combination offering that includes accommodation (hotel/motel/B&B/campground), dining, shopping and an outdoor experience or attraction (eagle viewing, walking, sea kayaking, fishing, hiking, float trips, museums etc.)

**Group A Strategies:**

- Pursue editorial coverage in key publications (mountain biking magazines, climbing magazines, wind surfing magazines, etc.)
- Utilize icons in the sport (top riders, climbers) to promote Squamish and why they come
- Include Squamish in extreme sport film releases
- Develop sport specific packages and include spousal options
- Organize in-store promotions in specialty shops, climbing gyms – feature stunning Squamish photography, Squamish prize weekends, etc.
- Attend Lower Mainland events/races – have a Squamish presence – booth with Squamish information and special packages
- Develop a sport specific collateral piece for distribution through appropriate channels (also consider, stickers, magnets)
- Add sport specific components to website – be sure to place well in search engines on key words

**Group B Strategies:**

- Pursue editorial in the Vancouver Sun, Province travel sections
- Develop package offerings that include accommodation, activity / attraction, dining and shopping coupons, etc.
- Include getaway package offerings in advertorial produced about Squamish e.g.: development features
- Advertise getaway packages in Lower Mainland newspapers
- Add ‘getaways’ section to website

**BC – 18-39 year old Travelers – Outdoor Experiences:**

This market will be influenced by the same promotional vehicles utilized to attract the Lower Mainland – Outdoor Experience market. In future, as resources permit, it may be possible to pursue some broader province wide marketing opportunities.

**Pacific Northwest – Getaways (featuring eagle viewing):**

This market is centred geographically in Vancouver and Seattle and requires the following approach:

- Develop package including accommodation, river float tour, visit to Brackendale Eagle Viewing Headquarters for an interpretive lecture, dinner for two and spa treatments for two etc.
- Promote this package in Vancouver and Seattle newspapers – travel getaways section with a central call to action – Squamish Adventure Centre (SAC)
- Promote “getaway packages” to summer/winter visitors at SAC – rack card
- Secure editorial coverage in same newspapers that focuses on eagle viewing and mentions special eagle viewing getaway weekend as part of story
- Promote package on website – secure high placement on key words such as ‘eagles’
- Contact local chapters of Audubon Society, Naturalists, bird watching clubs etc. in Lower Mainland and Seattle and distribute offer to their members

**Lower Mainland families – Day trips and Getaways (featuring Railway/Mining heritage)**

This market is best approached as follows:

- Develop a family day trip program that includes entry to Railway/Mining attractions and coupons for special offers at a range of local restaurants
- Develop a family overnight program that includes entry to Railway/Mining attractions, camping or hotel option, and coupons for special offers at a range of local restaurants/retail shops
- Develop a family overnight package themed for Squamish Loggers’ Days that includes entry to Railway/Mining attractions, camping or hotel option, and coupons for special offers at a range of local restaurants/retail shops
- Develop ‘learn to kayak’, ‘learn to mountain bike’ ‘learn to rock climb’ weekend offers for families – accommodation, equipment rental, instruction, coupons in local restaurants/retail shops
- Secure editorial coverage in ‘parenting’ magazines with high readership in Lower Mainland, and in daily newspapers – feature Royal Hudson, Mining Museum, ‘learn to....programs’ and include special package offers
- Promote to families already staying in Squamish e.g. Alice Lake Campground, Howe Sound Inn, Library, SAC etc. – post ‘Things to Do’ in Squamish in public facilities

### **Whistler - Day trips:**

Visitors to Whistler who are interested in a day trip away from the resort will be influenced by the following strategies:

- Advice from their hotel front desk/concierge – these front line staff must be educated about Squamish day trip options through personal familiarization trips to experience the activities and through face-to-face conversations at their place of business. They are also typically commissioned for sending business, so a referral fee arrangement must be negotiated that ideally includes a bonusing structure as volume of business increases. The SAC can coordinate these familiarization trips and arrange for one-on-one meetings. This could possibly take place with business operators in a trade show setting e.g. each Squamish activity has a booth and front line staff visit and inform themselves of options in a convenient day-long trade show
- Placement in Whistler Visitor Information Centre and training of VIC staff – a flat sheet of Squamish day trip opportunities should be developed and through negotiation with the Whistler VIC, placed in a visible location for guests interested in options outside of Whistler
- Participate in Whistler Spirit Days business showcase if scheduled – new arrivals to Whistler and those wishing to be eligible for a discounted lift pass must attend a trade show of businesses to orient themselves – SAC can attempt to negotiate participation of Squamish businesses with the Whistler Chamber of Commerce
- Whistler visitors who are intrigued by the SAC facility may stop by on their way to Whistler – the flatsheet of things to do in Squamish should be developed and be readily available for them to take away and consider during their Whistler stay

### **Implementation Plan/Year 1 Budget**

The implementation plan must consider both the establishment of the new Destination Marketing Organization, Tourism Squamish and the execution of the identified marketing and sales strategies to reach target markets.

Appendix G outlines implementation steps for the new organization and provides a detailed marketing and sales strategy for Year 1 of operations of Tourism Squamish.