Codes of Conduct for Indigenous-Inspired Spa and Wellness Tourism

by

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Abstract

While the growing global tourism industry currently provides best practices guidance and certification possibilities for ecotourism, green spas, and Indigenous tourism, no codes of conduct exist for spas operations that aim to sustainably integrate Indigenous-inspired healing modalities into their menu of services. I interviewed both Indigenous healers and wellness experts around the globe who incorporate ancient healing practices into spas. My analysis of these data culminated with recommended codes of conduct for Indigenous-inspired spas. The need for cultural sensitivity and guidelines unique to this sector are growing. Compared to examples such as handcrafts or cultural dance, wellness experiences are more personal, spiritual or at times even ceremonial. Spas that do not follow the codes of conduct may exploit culture amongst presenting other serious risks. Benefits to Indigenous communities when following codes of conduct include meaningful employment and the preserving of ancient healing practices that otherwise may be at risk of erosion. Benefits to destination spa or day spa clients include experiential cross-cultural learning and healing body therapies that reduce stress or improve well-being.

Keywords: codes of conduct, ecotourism, Indigenous, spa, sustainable, tourism.
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Dedication

This research work is dedicated to all of the Indigenous healers who have in the past shared and continue to share their traditions of helping restore the health of our people and planet. Throughout history and today, their practices may be ridiculed or questioned yet they stay true to their beliefs and continue to share their incredible healing gifts.
Epigraph

Spa comes from Latin roots *Salus Per Aquam*, meaning healing through water

(Frost, 2004)

Use of the term can be dated back to the 13th century; an iron-bearing spring at the Wallonian town of Spa

(Cramer, 1989 as cited in Barendregt, 2007)
Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis provides an overview and methodology for my research project, which is the final activity towards achieving my Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies through Royal Roads University. My primary research question is: *What are relevant codes of conduct for spas that integrate Indigenous traditional healing techniques?* The motivation for undertaking graduate level research is rooted in my desire to bring attention to an emerging area of spa and wellness tourism. SRI International (formerly Stanford Research Institute), a non-profit, independent research and innovation center serving government and industry, stated in a 2013 report that wellness tourism is worth US $439 billion globally and is projected to grow by more than 9% per year through 2017, nearly 50% faster than overall global tourism (Global Wellness Institute, 2014). A rising movement within wellness tourism is the integration of cultural elements into the spa and wellness experiences (Global Spa Summit LLC, 2011).

In such a new and unregulated sector it is important to plan carefully, especially since Indigenous peoples studies in recent years reveal that even well-intentioned tourism may wreak havoc if not properly managed (Center on Ecotourism and Sustainable Development and The International Ecotourism Society, 2003, p. 1). Responsible development practices are important in any sector, but especially important when they include culturally sensitive traditions. I, therefore, examined the cultural side of spas and wellness tourism around the globe. Consider as an example of culturally-infused wellness, the award-winning Jungle Bay Dominica, featuring a spa which integrates therapeutic essential oils sourced from the nearby rainforest, and massage techniques and other treatments inspired by the Indigenous Kalinago medicinal healers of the island. The co-owner of the spa celebrates her Amerindian heritage through the spa via traditional practices that may otherwise not be shared and ultimately retained. I developed a personal connection with Jungle Bay and its spa while working as the assistant general manager
and marketing director since it’s launch in 2005. Being part of this leading eco spa helped stimulate my interest in a more systematic examination of indigenous spa practices through my master’s thesis.

The research incorporates analysis of seminal documents related to Indigenous rights globally, such as those within the *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities* (Honey & Thullen, 2007), as well as more recent Indigenous rights declarations and related documents. I conducted semi-structured interviews with international experts in this specialized field to better understand globally agreed-upon recommendations for codes of conduct.

My project was methodologically informed by the work of Donahue (2011) whereby she used consensus to distil the definition of culturally sensitive ecotourism. My work is the first of its kind exploring cultural wellness experiences for travelers within the spa sector. The practical application opportunities and demand for this research were confirmed to me in 2012 when the Spa Industry Association of Canada asked me to speak as a keynote presenter at their annual meeting to showcase international ecotourism spa case studies around the globe. A majority of those case studies incorporated Indigenous practices into spa treatments, but because culture is ill-defined and cultural issues are unregulated, I was curious to research further. After an initial literature review, which follows in Chapter 2, I confirmed spas that incorporate culture as an area of importance in which to conduct research.

This research provides a focus for discussion and bringing different groups, including academics, practitioners, Indigenous communities, spa associations and tourism bodies together for further dialogue on the topic of Indigenous-inspired spa and wellness tourism.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Literature Review Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to situate my work within the context of the existing research in the fields of Indigenous people, tourism, spa and wellness. Having narrowed the material available into the areas of erosion of cultures, spas, and Indigenous traditions, I have explored the question of whether commodification of healing practices helps preserve cultures. Finally I provide a review of the current *Codes of Conduct in Indigenous Tourism*. The literature review was compiled to better understand any ambiguity around the current state of spas incorporating cultural healing traditions, and to discover what codes of conduct are being promoted. The research has come at a period of rapidly increasing globalization, prompting cultural assimilation towards westernized ways. Meanwhile, there is a rising demand for spa and wellness travel, some of which incorporate cultural practices.

Anja Behrens states that the wellness industry growth is stimulated by an increased interest in wellbeing as workplaces become more stressful. Consequently, “spa-going is now one of the most sophisticated and exciting ways of making holidays in the 21st century” (2007, p.1). *Condé Nast Traveler Magazine* (Harrison, 2013) suggests that Indigenous-inspired spa treatments are also becoming more sought out. Yet Wilson (2003) maintains that although therapeutic landscapes, such as natural spas, are recognized as restorative, cultural significance of the sites is overlooked and requires research attention. Culture is commonly left out of sustainable tourism planning in the shadow of environmental best practices, even though culture is one of the four pillars of sustainability (Hawkes, 2001).

While studying culturally sensitive tourism, I often encountered the term ecotourism. This observation was not surprising since ecotourism is one of the fastest growing subsectors of
tourism; respect for local culture is a tenet of ecotourism in addition to ecological and socio-economic sustainability (Agrwal & Baranwal, 2012, p.1). Donohoe discovered, however, through her scholarship into culturally sensitive tourism, that “since sustainable development was introduced, culture has been submersed by more pressing tourism priorities such as the economy and the environment” (2011, p. 27).

**Erosion of Cultures**

Though there is not a globally agreed upon definition of *culture*, cultural diversity is at risk around the globe (Williams, 1983). Williams describes culture as one of the top three most complicated words in the English language: “The concept of culture is by definition, central to cultural studies, yet there is no correct or definitive meaning attached to it” (cited in Barker, 2012, p. 39). Wade Davis, a National Geographic Explorer in Residence and Harvard anthropologist agrees: “the very word culture defies precise definition, even as the concept embraces multitudes” (2009, p. 32). “The canary in the coal mine” of a culture’s vibrancy is language (Davis, 2009, p.3). In his Massey Lectures, which have been collected into *The Wayfinders* (2009), he goes on to illuminate that over half of the world’s 7,000 languages are no longer taught to children. The rapid rate at which languages are dying has occurred in the last generation alone. Language, Davis says, is the best measure of the state of our Indigenous cultures, so currently we have a sobering global situation.

Sharing culture through means such as storytelling helps to preserve cultural traditions, especially since many cultures rely on oral history (Hodge, Pasqua, Marquez, & Geishirt-Cantrell, 2002). Similarly, the concept of oral history is relevant to spa tourism: Yan-ping (2006) deems storytelling to be very important in integrating culture with spa objects such as hot springs or spa temples.
Spa and Indigenous Traditions

Various wellness practices that we experience in spas today have traditions that can be dated back to Mesopotamian medicine (3000 BC) when therapeutic baths and massages were used by local healers (Retief & Cilliers, 2007). While the practices themselves have been happening for thousands of years, the term spa is much younger and dating back to an iron-bearing spring at the Wallonian town of Spa in the thirteen-century (Cramer, 1989 as cited in Barendregt, 2007). Unfortunately in the past few hundred years during global migrations and the colonization of numerous Indigenous groups, the traditional healing methods in many regions were banned and their practice seen as pagan. For example, in 1865 the Hawaiian government prohibited all traditional medicinal activities; that ban stayed in effect for a number of decades, driving traditional Polynesian healers to practice illegally underground or to abandon their traditions altogether (Blaisdell, 1996). Conversely, today’s Hawaiian healing practices like the Lomi Lomi ritual massage is a highly popular spa experience that travellers seek out. Ho’Omana Spa in Maui is said to be one of the more authentic training centers in the islands. Founder, Jeana Iwalani Naluai, uses the Ho’Omana Spa as an outlet to carry forward her ancestors’ healing art teachings (Naluai, 2014).

In mainland USA, the healing traditions of the Native Americans were also banned until 1978 when the Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed by the United States Congress, allowing Native Americans to practice their own forms of medicine once again (Struthers, Eschiti & Patchell, 2004, p. 143). In some regions of the continental USA, the healing traditions are now shared through a variety of spa settings (Harrison, 2013).

In 2007, the United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples reinforced that the same right to practice cultural traditions, which the American Indian
Religious Freedom Act returned to the Native Americans should be returned to the rest of the world. Article 12 advocates, “Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies” (p.6).

Today traditional Indigenous healing is indeed being shared more broadly: “The artistry of traditional Indigenous healing has entered an era of increasing popularity” as the value of such traditions has been revived (Struthers, et al, 2004, p. 141). Dr. Lori Alvord, a medical doctor of Navajo descent studying in the area of traditional healing, states, “my work has been to understand ceremony and culture that, if looked at under a different lens, are increasingly valued” (p. 146).

Robbins and Dewar (2011) research Canadian Indigenous practices and affirm, “in order for traditional knowledge to be maintained and to develop, it has to be practiced. Traditional healing is a vehicle that can be used for fulfilling these objectives” (p. 1). Through my research project I have explored if practicing indigenous traditions through sharing via a spa setting is helping or has the potential to help, preserve traditions. There is limited academic literature on the traditional healing in spa settings, and the existing research does not articulate how sharing traditional healing outside of the tribal community setting impacts the originating culture. Does this trouble traditional healers? Would it be beneficial to have codes of conduct to assure responsible sharing of practices that help customs survive the threat of complete disappearance under globalization while spreading the benefits of wellbeing to recipients of spa treatments?

Folk medicine, from which present day Indigenous healing modalities are derived, is part of an evolutionary process; it is not a static practice. In 1950, Hans Munsterer acknowledged that folk medicine is subject to processes of change (cited in Grabner, 1968, p. 154). More recently
respondents in Donohoe’s study on cultural sensitivity in tourism collectively reiterated the same message: “culture is not a commodity nor is it static or tangible” (2011, p. 36).

Quality research on spa and wellness best practices in the industry is limited, but timely and necessary. According to SRI International and Euromonitor, wellness tourism expenditures have grown rapidly to approximately 14% of all domestic and international tourism expenditures generating 11.7 million direct jobs and having a 1.8% impact on global GDP in 2012, (as cited by the Global Wellness Institute, 2014, p. vi).

Although there is swift growth in Indigenous treatments being integrated into spa therapies, some critics argue that cultural issues should be a more fundamental part of tourism planning (Donohoe, 2011). Research is needed to better understand whether or not spas and wellness operations have the potential to exacerbate cultural loss or negatively impact the cultures in which tourists go to experience Indigenous practices. In addition, while there are tourism studies exhibiting examples of cultural protection (Hodge, et al., 2002), there is limited evidence to verify that cultural spa tourism, in particular, has the potential to contribute to preservation of culture.

**Does Commodification of Healing Practices Help Preserve Cultures?**

As Wade Davis (2009) stresses, cultures all over the world are facing a crisis situation; their plight is preserving their differentiation against insidious westernization. We have a global responsibility to contribute to the preservation of Indigenous heritage. Literature on wellness tourism and Indigenous spa treatments leaves unanswered questions regarding ethical concern about commodification of a culture for the sale of wellness services. Properly planned and managed tourism has proven to offer a means of poverty alleviation and positive community development (Agrwal & Baranwal, 2012, p. 6); however, it is not a panacea for all of the world’s ecological, social and cultural problems. Where do spas fit into the tourism industry, and what
are the best practices in incorporating Indigenous healing practices? With the rapid growth in demand for non-pharmaceutical treatments and options, it will be increasingly important to understand how to proceed.

On the one hand, the book *Is the sacred for sale?* (Johnson, 2006) explores commodification of traditional ceremonies; the author argues that even well intentioned ecotourism is detrimental to Indigenous peoples (p. 52). Indigenous scholar Dr. Bunten (2010) agrees with Johnson’s statements that there are risks if Indigenous tourism is not planned and implemented properly; however, her research proposes “‘Indigenous capitalism’ as a distinct strategy to achieve ethical, culturally appropriate, and successful Indigenous participation within the global economy” (p. 285, 2014). My research helps go beyond Johnson’s question and helps answer the question: “should the sacred be for sale?”

**Current Codes of Conduct**

In reviewing the primary documents related to global Indigenous rights, I found that one of the more prominent works is the *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities* edited by Honey and Thullen (2007). Honey and Thullen suggest that “concerns over negative cultural impacts have led ecotourism promoters—including tourism operators, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international institutions—to adopt measures to mitigate externalities in Indigenous communities” (p.1). Based on this concern, the authors were inspired to develop the compilation of codes of conduct from around the globe. The codes focus broadly on tourism, not on specific codes of conduct for spa and wellness tourism.

Honey and Thullen conclude from their analyses that there is global documentation to show how tourism has the potential to do environmental, social and cultural damage. They argue
that standards and resources are needed so that tourism does not exploit Indigenous peoples (2007, p. viii). They also remark that promotion of codes of conduct in itself is not a solution to all problems, but rather the codes need to guide improvement and advance best practices. When I asked Martha Honey about the publication, she responded that “one of the most interesting facets of this research was to find that the codes of conduct from Indigenous organizations or conferences were often quite different – and stronger/more profound – than those put forth as ‘best practice’ codes by tourism businesses and tourism associations. They often defined differently what are the most importantly rights to be protected” (M. Honey, personal communication, October 16, 2014).

The following excerpts are some of the Indigenous tourism codes of conduct, taken from various international declarations, which are most relevant to wellness tourism:

First, the Indigenous Peoples’ Plan Of Implementation On Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2002 states:

We demand that the concept of cultural damage be incorporated to impact assessments as part of the legal instruments, which will safeguard our cultural integrity against energy mega projects, mining, tourism, logging and other unsustainable activities.

We urge States, governments and civil society to work in conjunction with Indigenous Peoples to ensure that Indigenous Peoples’ sacred, ceremonial and culturally significant sites and areas are preserved, respected and protected from destructive or exploitative development. We will ensure our peoples’ access to our sacred, burial, archaeological and historical sites, including the unqualified right to restrict access to those sites.
We commit ourselves to safeguard, protect and reaffirm the use of Indigenous knowledge and practices, respecting the spiritual values and dimensions of such knowledge. We will strengthen our own initiatives for disseminating information, research, capacity building and the exchange of experiences on biological and cultural diversity among Indigenous peoples.

We will take responsibility for tourism activities we generate, that these are based on our own development strategies, incorporate the respect for our traditional values, ethics and human rights and conserve our natural and cultural heritage (pp. 41-43).

The Oaxaca Declaration of The International Forum on Indigenous Tourism, Oaxaca, Mexico, 2002 code of conduct recommendations include:

Our lifeways and cultures are distinct, and we demand that … promoters acknowledge our fundamental rights to self-determination, prior informed consent, and the diverse ways that we choose to process and participate in such initiative.

Tourism is beneficial for Indigenous communities only when it is based on and enhances our self-determination. Outside "experts and assistance" are useful to us only if they work within frameworks conceptualized and defined by our communities. Therefore, tourism projects must be undertaken only under the guidance and surveillance of an Indigenous Technical Team, and only after a full critical analysis of the long-term pros and cons of tourism development (pp. 35-36).

The Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter Karioca Conference in Brazil, 1992 proclaims:

Our sacred and ceremonial sites should be protected and considered as the patrimony of Indigenous Peoples and humanity. The establishment of a set of legal and operational instruments at both national and international levels would guarantee this.
We must not allow tourism to diminish our culture. Tourists come into the communities and view the people as if Indigenous Peoples were part of a zoo. Indigenous Peoples have the right to allow or disallow tourism within their areas (p. 19).

Declarations published since Honey and Thullen’s works include the World Health Organization Legal Status of Traditional Medicine and Complementary/Alternative Medicine (Struthers et al, 2004, p. 141), and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007). Both similarly reinforce Indigenous empowerment and cultural rights.

Scholars Chang, Wall and Chu (2006) emphasise the importance of tourism best practices within Indigenous communities: “efforts should be made by the operator to maintain authenticity… Hence as McIntosh, 2004 pointed out it includes a high quality environment, interpretation and guiding by well-trained native people” (2006, p. 7).

Although globally-recognized proclamations demonstrate the importance of Indigenous rights, Johnston’s view is that practice does not necessarily follow the documents’ intents. For example, she claims that the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity is a “failure” and negatively impacted Indigenous peoples because globalization, profit and unsustainable growth models prevail in many cases where the guidelines are not enforced (2006, p. 278): “Many [countries] regard international laws on the environment, human rights and Indigenous Peoples as a burdensome political dance. They look for ‘solutions’ that will bring kudos without setting costly precedents” (2006, p.4). I would argue, then, that there is even more need than ever for dissemination of codes of conduct, and in my area of focus, Indigenous spa and wellness tourism codes of conduct are tools to connect these grander proclamations with best practices that can be implemented.
According to Barker, research involving cultural studies does not always follow traditional research methods (2012), and this finding is evident in a number of cultural tourism research projects from recent years. “Geocollaboratory for Indigenous Tourism Research” (Blangy, Donohoe, & Mitchell, 2011) reports on a participatory-action approach adapted to aboriginal contexts using a unique system which was set up to reach out to Indigenous tourism contacts in 13 remote communities. The data was then shared through differentiating traditional means and via Internet-based platforms such as a dedicated website and Google Maps, where data were matched to communities plotted on the interactive maps. Communicating with traditional communities takes a more strategic approach at times due to the remote geographic locations of respondents. Another study, “Finding and Foregrounding Massage in Khoisan Ethnography” (Low, 2007), was based on semi-structured interviews, participant observation and informal discussion to explore culturally inspired massages. “Curative Tourism in Jordan and its Potential Development” (Harahsheh, 2002) is a paper on a quantitative study of 210 tourists in six Jordanian curative tourism sites, including traditional hot springs, the Dead Sea and other similar locations. Finally, in “Defining Culturally Sensitive Ecotourism: a Delphi Consensus” (2011), Donohoe reports on the use of consensus building with global experts: “the Delphi proved to be a valuable and inclusive forum for the generation of ideas and debate. It produced a right data set that contributed to an evolving understanding of cultural sensitivity” (p. 43). Tourism experts and academics from a range of cultural backgrounds, representing 39 nationalities, were selected as study participants. They established that cultural sensitivity is indeed an important issue in tourism and rated the cultural sensitivity as very important (80.9%). Experts also prioritized the following issues as relevant to the support of culturally sensitive tourism:
• Community participation and benefits;
• Cultural awareness/education;
• Ethics/responsibility;
• Cultural conservation; and
• Cultural sensitivity: minimize impacts to cultural environments, foster intercultural awareness and respect, contribute to the protection of built and living cultural heritage, foster the informed participation and empowerment of local and Indigenous peoples, and respect the socio-cultural value systems of the host community (p. 37).

The points above raised by global tourism experts in Donohoe’s study reinforce the importance of my research focus in the area of cultural sensitivity, in so much as they capture all the common issues of cultural tourism that have potential for negative impact. Spa and wellness tourism that incorporates cultural aspects will indeed involve ethical questions around activity. It may be motivated in an effort to result in cultural conservation, and almost always has a cultural awareness or education component. A less common issue in the past, but growing trend now, is the move towards more community participation and benefits for the region, not only individuals; benefits may come in the form of corporate social responsibility or travel philanthropy.

Research Opportunities

Struthers et al. (2004) note that “many aspects of Indigenous healing have never been documented, or written, and never will. Further, formal research into healing ceremonies is almost nonexistent. Several factors contribute to this reality: (a) fear of ridicule by the practitioner and user of traditional Indigenous medicine, (b) concern of misuse of information if
divulged, (c) healing may be considered a private matter, (d) traditional healing is considered sacred, (e) healing practices are documented orally and thus remain unwritten” (p. 142).

While tourism can potentially help preserve culture if managed properly, a primary objective of tourism is typically the element of financial gain. Butler and Hintch (2007) show numerous sources that rationalize Indigenous tourism as a means for economic growth for the needy communities. The authors surmise that the income generated through tourism represents a fair value for value of exchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (p. 3). According to Chambers and McIntosh (2008), demand is growing for more investigation into the growing market for spa tourism in the Caribbean: "There is scope...for further research to be carried out into the wider healing properties of many Indigenous herbal remedies and, in order to develop medical tourism in this area, a priority must be to encourage such research and development” (p. 933). Moreover, the Global Wellness Institute (2014) lists the following amongst its reasons of why to study the wellness tourism economy:

- Tourism is a large and fast-growing industry;
- Wellness is a strong consumer trend;
- Wellness tourism is growing faster than the overall tourism industry;
- Wellness tourists are high-yield tourists who bring greater economic impacts;
- Wellness tourism can support preservation of traditional culture and natural assets, and can stimulate entrepreneurship; and
- Wellness tourism brings in revenues, creates jobs, and may help improve the well being of the general population. (p. V)
My research work is unequivocally aligned since the research data responds to all of the Global Wellness Institute’s areas of demand, and in particular the second to last point about how wellness tourism has potential to support preservation of cultural traditions.

**Literature Review Summary and Questions**

In reviewing the culturally sensitive tourism as well as spa wellness literature, I have found that there is a significant gap in that no studies link the two by integrating indigenous-inspired spa tourism. While Donohoe’s study on culturally sensitive tourism demonstrates the importance of managing cultural issues (2011), it does not specifically address the spa tourism subsector. Similarly, in relation to codes of conduct, Honey and Thullen’s work on the *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities* (2007) is comprehensive; however, it does not frame relevant codes specifically for spa and wellness tourism. My study is therefore important in that it provides an understanding of the unique set of codes of conduct that are necessary to apply to the rapidly emerging spa sector.

The sources and various scholarly approaches in my review process have therefore guided me to formulate the focus for the direction I have taken in completing my research to answer the primary research question: *What are relevant codes of conduct for spas that integrate Indigenous traditional healing techniques?* In applying the codes of conduct I, among other things, had a goal of examining undesirable modification of cultures. I refined the question to respond to a gap in the subject area where the results can respond to scholarly and industry needs. It is both critical and timely in the niche tourism sector. My investigation explores what is considered culturally appropriate and ethical, in the opinions of the Indigenous communities, in allowing the tourism and spa sectors to commodify Indigenous cultural practices. There are secondary questions that were also included in the questions to respondents. For example, *How is the commodification of traditional healing practices viewed by various stakeholders including
Indigenous communities, spa developers, academics and consumers? And building on what
Honey and Thullen (2007) as well as Chang, et al., (2006) have revealed, I believe the following
to be an important question: *Is cultural storytelling part of the solution to growth in authentic
culturally infused spa and wellness tourism?*
Chapter 3: Research Design

Overview of Research Design

My research design structure took a qualitative approach and followed a modified, shortened Delphi method. While I was inspired by Donohoe’s 2011 comprehensive study of culturally sensitive tourism, the scope of my study is more focused on a more narrow study area and therefore I refined the method accordingly. The data collection involved semi-structured interviews with two pools of industry experts to explore codes of conduct within Indigenous-inspired spa tourism. The dialogue acquired the qualitative data by eliciting knowledge from the groups of experts. My analysis work followed Creswell’s (2009) content analysis from multiple sources and compared data with emerging categories to illuminate the similarities and differences. The categories then contributed to the development codes of conduct for the growing niche sector of cultural spa tourism. All aspects of the research design will be explained in depth within this chapter.

Sample

Respondents were from two distinct sample groups. The first was composed of cultural spa tourism experts including spa owners or managers who incorporate cultural practices into their operations, as well as academics with experience in spa, cultural tourism or codes of conduct for sustainable practices. The Indigenous group included representatives who utilize healing modalities; they are shamans, medicinal healers, or others who have an understanding of traditional healing modalities and their potential for use in spa or wellness settings. All respondents were selected for both their experience and their geographic diversity.

Sampling

I selected a pool of 48 potential participants identified through credible industry sources, and then evaluated them based on an initial set of questions (Appendix) to confirm if the
individuals fit the criteria. I met my goal of having 24 from the initial pool qualify for the final group from which 12 were interviewed or surveyed. As stated earlier, I used two main sample populations from which suitable candidates were identified for participation in the surveys. Each of the distinct groups of experts is considered to represent key stakeholders in the area of culturally sensitive spa and wellness practices. Experienced spa operators, developers and practitioners have their own experiences to share. I engaged Indigenous peoples and invited them to contribute their perspectives on how sharing some of their sacred practices fit into spa tourism.

![Diagram](image)

Global search for respondents was conducted based on criteria; **48** prospective respondents identified

**24** qualified for the final panel set

**12** respondents

*Figure 1. Selecting candidates for the survey*

Considering that not all individuals were available for interviews during the time period of my research, I originally designed the pool to be larger than the target number of interviews. I met the targeted minimum number of six respondents in the cultural spa tourism expert and they were made up of a mix of mostly spa practitioners, some with academic backgrounds as well. Six relevant Indigenous representatives made up my pool of respondents. The following provides an overview of how each of the sample populations was chosen for the interview process.
Culturally sensitive spa and wellness experts.

The culturally sensitive spa and wellness experts group comprised spa and wellness industry professionals such as spa owners, operators, consultants who help design and establish spas, spa therapy trainers, treatment therapists trained in massage, steam, body therapies, etc. and academic experts. A pool of 24 specialists in the field was identified through expert referrals, literature review, Internet searches, spa industry association directories, editorials coverage, award and certification listings and word of mouth. Criteria were then used to conduct a rapid assessment of the population to determine a short list to contact. Each individual was asked if he or she:

- had a minimum of one year of experience in connection with at least one spa or wellness facility that offers healing modalities inspired by traditional Indigenous practices;
- had at least one professional credential confirming experience in the spa and wellness or Indigenous healing modalities;
- had no documented charges or allegations against him or her from Indigenous groups claiming to be exploited or disrespected;
- agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes.

After the process of vetting, the final population who answered yes to all of the above was 14 participants.

Indigenous representatives.

The indigenous representatives group was composed of Indigenous peoples who are knowledgeable about traditional healing and practices. In some regions the individual is called a traditional medicine healer; the terminology varies from one culture to another. Therefore there
were no restrictions on the title, but rather I used their experiences in healing modalities and traditional cultural knowledge to determine their participation in the survey. Village chiefs or elders were also important in the process and although they may not practice the traditions with their hands, often they are incredibly knowledgeable and are the officials in charge of communicating important matters on behalf of their entire tribes or cultures.

A pool of 24 individuals in the field was identified through expert referrals, a literature review, Internet searches, Indigenous association directories, editorials coverage, award and certification listings, word of mouth, and other industry sources. Criteria were then used to conduct a rapid assessment to determine a short list to survey. The individuals were next asked if he or she:

- came from an Indigenous lineage / blood line by birth;
- had at least three years of experience and interest in traditional healing modalities that are related to their own cultural traditions or heritage;
- had an understanding to speak on behalf of what their Indigenous culture sees as respectful and acceptable sensitive practices to their peoples;
- agreed to participate in a semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes.

After the process of vetting, the final population who answered yes to all of the above criteria were 10 individuals who were willing and able to proceed with the interview. A number of Indigenous healers from the pool were unable to continue to be respondents because they had to go into remote areas for healing or because of other community commitments in places where phone and Internet did not allow participation.

Due to the isolated location of some cultural groups (Blangy, Donohoe and Mitchell, 2011, p.1), there was the potential for lower participation rates by the stakeholder group. I
therefore made considerable efforts to be flexible and ensure they were given ample opportunity to participate in the interviews by phone, and in some cases, via a research assistant. I also developed a contingency plan to collect more responses from the qualified panel set in preparation in case some of the participants were not willing or able to participate, or if a high percentage of responses were not acceptable for use.

**Questionnaire Development and Testing**

The initial questionnaires used for the two distinct groups of respondents were carefully refined and customized for the target groups. The Appendix includes an invitation letter, a consent agreement and a description of the interview instrument for both culturally sensitive spa and wellness experts and Indigenous representatives. I tested the questions with an indigenous spa expert and refined the grammar slightly, to make it cross-culturally relevant, before proceeding with the remainder of interviews. The main questions were broken into constructs to acquire information from the participants in key areas that together helped answer the main research question. The interviews closed after I collected important demographic information.

**Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews**

I conducted some interviews by voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) technology using skype.com, and for others I communicated via Internet-based questionnaires. However, the same instrument and questions guided both methods. The questions were drafted for two similar but distinct surveys (Appendix), and as such I customized them to the target populations. Each interview started with an introductory script and then I began asking key questions. Because these interviews were semi-structured, I asked a minimum of four key questions; discussions and sub-topic questions at times arose out of the responses provided. I later extrapolated the data to help me answer the overall thesis problem. For all respondents, qualitative data from the
interviews gave context to the research questions. In addition to the key questions, each survey also included a base set of demographic questions. Demographic questions varied slightly with the respondent groups. The interviews were developed with cultural sensitivity in mind, and therefore garnered Royal Roads University ethics approval.

**Analysis Approach**

I analyzed content as per methods outlined by Creswell (2009, pp. 188-195), beginning the process by taking the voice recording data from the interviews then transcribing into text for recorded interviews, and exporting data into Microsoft Excel documents from written responses. Subsequently,

a) I read the content through to identify themes and made notations in the margins.

b) After the initial review, I carried out further content analysis of the interview data using standard qualitative analysis and a coding process. The process involved identifying themes and differentiating each segment of data with a label.

c) Next I conducted a preliminary data analysis within the categories. Labeling of categories was adjusted.

d) Once my categories were systematically organized, I generated a description to explain each. Creswell (2009) suggests that approximately five to seven themes may emerge in addition to the list of recommended codes of conduct, and I had six.

e) Next I integrated each theme into the qualitative narrative to compare the new data against the existing literature, including Honey and Thullen’s *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities* (2007).
f) In the final step of the data analysis, I interpreted findings to establish lessons learned and reveal the answers to the original research questions in order to complete the research report.

**Industry Deliverables**

Since the data are incredibly valuable, once disseminated the information will inform stakeholders and the broader industry of how current practices impact decision-making, social impact, and revenue. I am circulating the results via the three deliverables. The first will be this thesis, which can be used as an academic reference, and published journal articles may follow. The second deliverable will be a brochure using the *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Indigenous Inspired Spa and Wellness*, which can be found in Chapter 6. The brochure will be written using commonly accepted yet simply industry terminology and less academic research information for easy reference by spa and wellness practitioners or indigenous community groups. The brochure will be shared electronically to all industry survey respondents as well as the broader spa and wellness tourism industry. Both of these deliverables may also be dispersed, as appropriate, through various channels including conference presentations, press releases, global Indigenous or spa and wellness associations, ecotourism associations, traveler’s networks and more for their members to download. The third deliverable will be a Spanish translation of the brochure, since it was revealed that Latin America hosts a large percentage of Indigenous-inspired spa experiences.

**Ethics**

The research involved human subjects from around the globe; therefore my proposal was submitted to the Royal Roads University Ethics Review Board for approval. Due to the remote location of some cultural groups, I knew that it was possible that their participation would be
low; however, they are a priority stakeholder group for the study and I made considerable efforts to ensure they were offered the opportunity to participate. The research project also embraced the principles of the Precautionary Approach (Johnston, 2006 p. 22) as recommended by the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). The CBD encourages the approach to empower Indigenous peoples when it comes to traditional knowledge, and it is appropriate to my research. The survey questions err on the side of caution: when I was uncertain, I took a more conservative approach with the cultural sensitivity of the topics being researched and used elements of the Precautionary Approach in my interviews to determine, for example, what is sacred and non-negotiable for the Indigenous groups to share or commodify versus what they wish to allow as healing modalities in modern day settings to help disperse the benefits of their knowledge in order to continue the healing traditions.
Chapter 4: Results

Analysis

This results chapter explores findings from my research data using the analysis methods recommended by Creswell, 2009. I begin the chapter with the Description of Sample, which provides an overview of the characteristics of the respondents. I then share the various themes that emerged from this analysis, categorized into three main sections: Risk Theme, Codes of Conduct Themes and Other Operational Themes. Chapter 6 contains a compilation of the concise set of codes of conduct themes without the analysis notes, but blended with existing secondary research codes of conduct from Thullen and Honey, as highlighted in the literature review.

Description of Sample.

The respondents contributed to my questions from December 2014 through April 2015. There were 12 respondents in total, made up of six Indigenous and six non-Indigenous industry experts. The following sections describe attributes of the sample by first dissecting the demographics of the respondents, and then exploring their cultural heritage and motivations for involvement in the field. It is worth noting the cultural background about one respondent: while both of her grandmothers were of indigenous bloodlines, they married non-indigenous spouses and thus the respondent’s parents and herself had a blend of indigenous (pre-colonial) and post-colonial heritage. According to Martinez-Cobo’s widely used working definition of Indigenous peoples from 1986, (as cited by Hill, Grant George, Robinson, Jackson, & Abel, 2012) this respondent fell into the non-indigenous category for my study. Notwithstanding, the respondent
embodies her cultural heritage as a lifestyle. Her responses demonstrated a life-long commitment to the culture on the same level that the other indigenous respondents did.

**Demographics.**

Table 1 provides a distribution analysis of the sample by demographic variables. Some individuals from the sample had lived in more than one region to work specifically in indigenous healing, and as such those countries were add to the table. Every continent of the globe that has indigenous residents (ie all apart from Antarctica) was representated through the sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Geographic Expertise</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Indigenous Experts Total</td>
<td>4 female</td>
<td>Canada&lt;br&gt;Caribbean&lt;br&gt;Mexico&lt;br&gt;Peru&lt;br&gt;Thailand</td>
<td>Metis of Cree decent&lt;br&gt;Amerindian&lt;br&gt;Mayan decent&lt;br&gt;Quechua; Rainbow masters&lt;br&gt;7 rays of the light&lt;br&gt;Thai (x2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Indigenous Experts Total</td>
<td>2 male</td>
<td>Australia&lt;br&gt;Austria&lt;br&gt;Canada&lt;br&gt;India&lt;br&gt;Mexico&lt;br&gt;United Kingdom&lt;br&gt;USA&lt;br&gt;Southern Africa</td>
<td>Celtic&lt;br&gt;North American&lt;br&gt;British&lt;br&gt;Caucasian&lt;br&gt;Mayan&lt;br&gt;Hindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 female&lt;br&gt;2 male</td>
<td>4 female&lt;br&gt;2 male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age distribution of respondents was as follows:

- Indigenous experts: 35, 40, 47, 55 and 63 years old (1 skipped this question); and
- Non-Indigenous experts: 34, 34, 47, 49, 60 and 64 years old.

The sample encompassed a blend of the world’s leaders in the field of indigenous-inspired spa therapy and they came highly recommended from industry sources. It is relevant to
note that in Western societies, importance is placed on certifications and professional credentials, yet in Indigenous societies certifications have not traditionally been used. Often the hands-on training and mentoring for aspiring healers comes from community elders or family members and does not result in documented credentials. As cross-cultural sharing with outsiders occurs more, there is increased demand placed on presenting documentation of qualifications because visitors wish to ensure a quality experience and assume documentation is the measure of quality assurance. Yet a lack of certification parchments does not deem an indigenous healer unqualified. When developing my sample, I only asked non-Indigenous experts to name their qualifications as part of the criteria for participation and the results are listed below. Though Indigenous respondents were not required to provide professional credentials as a condition to participate in the study, several of them shared their experience and accolades as listed below:

*Non-Indigenous Experts.*

- Ayurveda healing, including the Shatayu Bhava Massage, naturopathy, holistic massage, deep tissue massage, hot stone massage, cosmetology, acupuncture;
- Diploma Osteopathy; Licentiate Acupuncture; Doctorate in KhoeSan Healing;
- Physiotherapy and alternative treatments degree (reflexology, relaxing massage, energy massage), four years academy in physical education, Reiki first and second degrees, Yoga seminar 200h;
- Certification in Hangab-Practicioner, Nuad-Therapist and Yoga Instruction;
- Healing arts training by Daniel Fowler;
- Student of Chinese medicine and Japanese traditional healing techniques for five years in Japan in the late 1970's;
- Licensed Massage Therapist Ayurveda Counsellor; and
• Post-graduate study at Harvard University.

*Indigenous Experts.*

• Member of several international and indigenous councils including the World Wisdom Council whose honorary chair is Mikhail Gorbachev;

• Certification in Taoism, Sound Healing, Basic Tibetan Medicine, Reiki, Therapeutic Touch Meditation, Posture Training and Traditional Thai Medicine, Ph.D. in Health Sociology. Featured on several BBC programs on Holistic Health and on Discovery Channel Asia;

• Registered massage therapist (RMT), Polarity, Tibetan Energy Massage, Reiki Master, Shiatsu, Cranio-sacral, Somato Emotional Realease, Post traumatic Stress Syndrome, Myofascial Therapy and Traditional Native Healing; and

• Many massage training programs in different schools in Mexico.

*Motivation for involvement.*

Below are quotes in response to the question: what motivated you to get involved in spa tourism incorporating indigenous healing practices? An overall theme of these responses regarding motivation for involvement addresses the issue of retaining a tradition or sharing healing practice. Those who had family members in the healing arts were given the opportunity to carry on traditions, and in many cases that honorable opportunity became a motivation. The shift in international economy also makes the globalization of indigenous healing a prevalent issue at this time. Two respondents echoed Bunton’s 2010 reference to “Indigenous capitalism”, as per the literature review. Some respondents explained that in the past the protocol was for a healer not to ask for money for their services but rather the client or patient would pay what they could as a donation. Current global economics have moved us to a place where even traditional
 healers in more remote communities require economic means, and as such it is not considered negative to take money as an exchange instead of a bag of fruits and vegetables, which are examples of means of payment in the past.

*Indigenous expert respondents.*

The following are additional quotes from Indigenous experts responding to the question about what motivated them to become involved in this work:

- “Retain traditional culture and continue to motivate the younger general to increase their knowledge.”
- “The integration of body and mind, and the awareness that each culture has their way to survival… there are various approaches toward health and well-being.”
- “To preserve and introduce original Thai culture; for a more sustainable community in Thailand.”
- “… to help people. I love to know I am helping the world to improve the wellness, to expand my energy, in honor to my parents; they did have the gift too.”
- “Since I was six years old I was initiated into the healing culture by my grandfather and was flowing naturally and became the way of being. Now thanks to that I can work with individuals on an individual level and in local Indigenous organizations. I am additionally passing the lineage into youth in the village and as a result the tradition is now coming back. Teamwork is important in this process.”

Some of the motivation responses above from Indigenous experts are also woven into Theme 6 later in this chapter, which reveals common traits of traditional healers.
Non-Indigenous expert respondents.

The following are quotes from non-Indigenous experts responding to the question about what motivated them to become involved in this work:

- “My grandmother is Hindi and the inheritance from her to me was the teaching of the natural Ayurveda medicine starting at age 14. Personally, being able to live with Indigenous made me honor my ancestors and I now share the practices because I am proud to keep the healing tradition going while helping others heal.”
- “There has to be a benefit for the local people. Working with local people can raise their profile, foster their knowledge, and provide employment.”
- “I began my personal studies in Japan in the late 1970's where I studied both Chinese and Japanese healing traditions. When I finally became involved in spas in the late 1980's it made perfect sense that the global healing traditions would have an important place.”
- “I realized that I was practicing Ayurveda before I had ever heard the terminology and so learning Ayurveda came naturally. I also did extensive travel around the world and am always curious about alternative modes of healing and how to practice them myself.”
- “Respect for nature.”

Risk Theme

Theme 1: Risks of unregulated Indigenous-inspired spa and wellness.

The following points were raised by respondents as risks and concerns related to operating indigenous-inspired spa and wellness tourism that are not guided by codes of conduct.
The study of risks offers us both depths of understanding for the purpose of the codes as well as how to frame them. If there are no codes of conduct to follow, the risks in the table below would have a higher likelihood of occurring, especially given the current rapid growth of the health and wellness tourism. We can study the risks to help understand ways to avoid them. For example, a particularly noted risk is exploitation of Indigenous groups; this concern can transfer into a code of conduct that encourages positive actions to avoid the exploitation. By recognizing the risks in Table 2 the industry can proceed with more awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
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<p>| <strong>Study of Risks Offers Depths of Understanding for Development of Codes</strong> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Risks (from respondents)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Code of Conduct (in response to risks)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Exploitation of culture.</td>
<td>• Ensure respect of local community by proving them opportunity to give input in planning of spa or wellness experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comply with Indigenous treaties, relevant national labour laws, and also ensure visitors are aware of regulations as applicable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The spa setting being used as an outlet for sex tourism and prostitution.</td>
<td>• Encourage clear descriptions of what services the business offers so there is no ambiguity. Following laws as per the jurisdictions that the spa is operating in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A current trend towards ceremonies (such as Temazcal and iyahuasca) becoming too commercialized and losing authenticity when offered in wellness or spa setting without consultation with indigenous healers.</td>
<td>• Ensure that Indigenous representatives provide input when developing spa or wellness products around traditional ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Greenwashing.</td>
<td>• Ensure honest marketing of the experiences to accurately represent the culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Therapists may do it for the money and not care or understand the culture</td>
<td>• Provide spa practitioners with the option to offer the treatments that most</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or they may be forced to take training they are not interested in”.

- Non-traditional healers may miss critical protocol that would ensure integrity.

- Injuries may occur if not done properly like the deaths in the [2009] sweat lodges in USA.

- “These sorts of relationships are abused financially time and again”.

- Diminishing or diluting of training when meeting tourist/client requests.

- Utilize the most qualified Indigenous healers to train the spa practitioners and ensure that the trainees understand protocol.

- Ensure the safety of clients. Confirm that all spa techniques, products, construction materials and environmental surroundings contribute to positive experiences.

- Developers shall be open to third party vetting and regularly monitoring. If they fail to comply with Indigenous guidelines, the spa should discontinue the cultural practices.

- Set boundaries so when tourists make requests, the practitioner has the right to say “no” to keep the integrity of the tradition.

### Codes of Conduct Themes

Theme two has four sub-sections and these are the foundations for the Codes of Conduct for how a spa and wellness operation should be planning and operating.

**Theme 2: Recommended (Draft) Codes of Conduct.**

Respondents recommended the codes of conduct that follow; they fell into four sub-categories: a) Honouring the traditional culture / ethics; b) Product development and training; c) The client experience; and d) local empowerment and philanthropy. In Chapter 6 the codes of conduct are further refined to remove analysis notes then fused with relevant literature review such as the Honey and Thullen 2009 *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities.* The result is a compressed more user-friendly document for use by the industry.
**Theme 2a: Honouring the traditional culture / ethics.**

The responses below are quotes that speak most clearly to the idea of honouring, preserving and giving credit to the cultures from which traditional healing come, and to sharing these traditions in a sustainable and respectful way:

- “Whoever sets up [spa and wellness] infrastructure for the [Indigenous people] should be vetted in some way.”
- “The industry should assist and promote this knowledge to tourism for future growing of wellness industry to make it different from others.”
- “[Various practices of healing culture would prosper if we] attempt to retain the practice as much as possible.”
- “[Spas must respect and] not share some traditions if deemed to be sacred ceremonies.”
- “[Spas must] educate spa-goers to recognize that the practice is part of the holistic cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.”
- “[By] combin[ing] the ancient wisdom and knowledge, the client gets more than just relaxing or superficial experiences but they can also heal].”
- “Though it may be a challenge, find genuine [healers] to carry out the traditions [on behalf of] lineages.”
- “Remain true [to] traditional culture and continue to motivate the younger generation to increase their knowledge.”
**Theme 2b: Product development and training.**

Spa and wellness facility developers, managers and others sharing Indigenous-inspired healing experiences may benefit from the following codes of conduct that were recommended by respondents. The theme of properly planning for and training staff to provide experiences is also supported by the work of Donohoe (2011) who argues that planning is critical for the success of sustainable cultural tourism. Chang, et al (2006) further stress the importance of maintaining authenticity, and McIntosh (2004) says that interpretation of traditions and guiding by well-trained native people is key to ethical spa operations. Here’s what the respondent’s told me:

- “Authentic training is a must.”
- “Protocol and process should be taught by the most knowledgably traditional healer available.”
- “Explain the Indigenous elements to public.”
- “Education for clients via story telling [will] ensure integrity of origin. [It is a high priority].”
- “Most luxury spas will utilize a visiting practitioner program that bring in a qualified healer to work with their spa rather than train their own spa therapists.”
- “Indigenous groups must have their right to monitor their practices in the spa.”
- “Ensuring health and safety [of the clients] is the responsibility of the practitioner [in order] to facilitate an experience that is healing rather than harming.”
- “Explain the Indigenous elements to [the] public [and guests].”
- “Education for clients [through] story telling [helps] to ensure integrity of [cultural] origins.”
• “Keeping [the traditional therapy] original yet modifying for modern times/time constraints, etc. [can be done] if it does not change the essence of the experience.”
• “Therapists who care about the tradition should be invited to take the training; no one should be forced to take [indigenous spa therapy] training if it does not resonate with them.”
• “Therapists must value a commitment to healing while not disrespecting the practice.”
• “When working with individuals…you customize the treatment according to the body’s needs, therefore the spa practitioner and clients should be flexible to adjust the service as needed.”
• “[The spa shall include] elements of culturally appropriate art and music… spa architecture integration with nature-based elements, ambiance, music, local food and beverage, décor as well as spa staff member attire.”
• “I learned by studying in Spain that the word ‘spa’ comes from Latin roots ‘Salus Per Aquam’ meaning healing through water. We must honor and include the important element of water in healing. This may come in the form of sound of a fountain, experiencing a nearby waterfall or integrating healing bath or cleansing as an option at the spa.” [Note: literature confirmed that spa is indeed an acronym for Salus Per Aquam (Frost, 2004).]

The statements from respondents overall speak to the “sense of place” concept associated with National Geographic’s ”geotourism” which also addresses environment, culture, aesthetics and other elements to provide more authentic tourism experiences that are true to local settings (Martini, Alcalá, Brilha, Lantria, Sá, & Tourtellot, 2012).
**Theme 2c: The client experience.**

The items in this section are based on quotes from respondents; please note many of them are closely related to or also listed in Theme 2b: Product development and training.

- “[Greet] the client in a traditional way while making [him/her] feel comfortable . . . the experience begins during the welcome.”

- “[Make certain that] education [is a] component to ensure that [the] spa does not dilute the great practice of Indigenous knowledge; the spa must promote and respect the Indigenous knowledge and not claim [its] right [to] Indigenous knowledge.”

- “[Make] art and culture are a component; [spa goers expect] that the ambiance and experience will reflect the Indigenous culture.”

- “[Provide] tourists . . . a brief introduction.”

- “[Teach clients] . . . that a treatment such as a massage [does not have] to be rough to get results . . . a gentle touch can be healing as well as . . . with traditional energy bodywork.” “[Encourage] travellers [to do] research to see whom the Indigenous people represent. If they are part of a community and larger healing family in general [the spa treatment] is more likely to be authentic.”

- “[Keep the spa experience] original while modifying for modern times” (some but not all stat that this is acceptable).

- “[Integrate] ancient wisdom in the spa with fusion (blending) of treatments . . . to help clients feel more comfortable with something that is very different and unfamiliar by blending it with a more common spa experience such as a massage. Nothing goes against each other; it will not do damage. The healers will find the essence of each, learn how
they heal and use them on the individuals. This needs to be explained to the client though so they know the origins of the treatment’;

- “[Ensure] health and safety is addressed; it is the responsibility of the practitioner to facilitate an experience that is healing rather than harming.”

- “Consider membership in a regional or global association or accreditation body to align with codes of conducts in professionalism, health as well as client privacy and confidentiality, [for example] International SPA Association (ISpa).”

- “Tell the story because the educational component is key.”

- “[Understand that] clients come [to spas because] they are seeking spiritual or alternative healing.”

- “[Seek] awareness about herbs, plants, culture and natural healing methods.”

- “[Adjust] treatments for clients’ comfort and time availability; but [understand] how much modification is acceptable.”

The top three points in the list are strongly connected to the literature I have reviewed. First, the issue of avoiding dilution is aligned with the Indigenous Peoples Earth Charter Kari-oca Conference in Brazil (1992). Second, creating authentic ambiance through interior design, landscape architecture, background music, local elements incorporated into the experience, all connects to the literature by Martini, et al, (2012).

**Theme 2d: Local empowerment and philanthropy.**

The final section of the codes of conduct sub-themes focuses on ensuring benefit through empowerment, training, job creation or other economic exchange such as purchasing local products from the community to boost the economy. Furthermore, a couple of the experts explained the value of corporate social responsibly or giving back in the form of philanthropy by
the spa owner/manager. On the point of empowerment, one specialist pointed out that the operations “must be carried out by people from the communities who are aware enough of the bigger picture to understand what is going on and get a fair deal.”

Though fewer respondents commented on the issue of philanthropy, it is a rapidly growing priority within mainstream tourism and ecotourism, and is a prevalent theme in the literature (Driscoll, Hunt, Honey & Durham, 2011), so it is no surprise that the respondents addressed it in my study. Two experts recommended, and others indirectly alluded to the idea that spas partaking in Indigenous-inspired spa tourism should give back to the cultures from which traditions are borrowed so that entire community benefits and trust continues to build. One indigenous respondent astutely said: “Traditional Indigenous peoples are very cautious about sharing their medicine, as they have been subject to much abuse, and have lost much of their culture due to residential schools, reservation life. They are sensitive to be taken advantage of in this way for profit. This is why I give back to the Indigenous people by way of supporting emergency shelters and offering my services in a more traditional way.”

The theme of travel philanthropy is in alignment with Donohoe’s 2011 findings that community participation and benefits are a key to mutual success for both the tourism operation and the community. Another respondent stated philanthropy is important to encourage spas to respect and conserve nature-based resources, which also affect the operations of the spa and promotes the use of natural products from the earth for healing.

**Other Operational Themes**

The last section on themes focuses on additional items that are not direct recommendations for the codes of conduct, but that have impact on the development and operations of a spa that incorporates Indigenous-inspired therapies.
Theme 3: Common terminology.

A number of terms came up repeatedly from respondents during my research, and after analyzing them against the main questions, it is apparent to me that the lexicon provides guiding vocabulary for the codes of conduct. Figure 2 features these common words and keyword phrases: spa, wellness, culture, education, story, Indigenous, authentic, ancient, story-telling, traditional, sacred space, based on traditional knowledge, traditional healers, healing, cleansing, masters of their culture, based on oral and experiential tradition (often not written), spiritual (not necessarily religious), lineage, connection to Mother Earth / the environment and Indigenous-inspired and finally monitoring and evaluation. One expert underscored the importance of differentiating Indigenous spa from Indigenous-inspired spa: “I'm glad you used the words Indigenous-inspired. It compares to other cultural tourism in both the good, and bad ways. What
is offered to tourists is quite often an aberrant interpretation of the authentic tradition.” The value of the above terms is that they help frame the terminology for this newly evolving subsector of spa tourism. Future work in the area of terminology will be beneficial.

**Theme 4: Growing global demand.**

The theme of growing global demand for wellness tourism speaks to the case for action (Chapter 5) because that demand leads to the importance and timeliness of the codes of conduct. Pertinent comments from respondents that came under this theme include the following:

- “[There is an] increased demand for alternative healing.”
- “The” shrinking world leads to more access to other cultures.”
- If embodied properly, this type of experience leads to preservation of culture;
- Increased stress and need for natural connections to the earth and healing remedies; and
- Before cultures were more keeping the traditions secret by as the time goes by they feel it is important to share those things to others;
- In past Indigenous ceremonies were forced underground and to be secret as practices were ‘illegal’ but now they are legitimized. There are trust issues with some Indigenous groups.

The reactions from respondents echo what Behrens (2007), Harrison (2013), Global Wellness Institute (2014), and Global Spa Summit LLC (2011) have raised about rapid growth in this niche area of spa and wellness tourism. The last two bullet points in the list above are especially aligned with Blaisdell (1996).

A few additions to the theme of growing global demand come from a respondent who shared some natural remedies recipes for some therapies that she says are increasingly requested by her clients. She mixes turmeric with honey and yogurt to make an exfoliating facial masque,
then follows it with a gentle massage. Her home care recommendations for spa clients are: turmeric facial masque twice a week, turmeric massages regularly, hibiscus lotion daily, and turmeric tea daily to cleanse body. She claims that these practices can be used in place of plastic surgery and other cosmetic spa treatments that modern medical spas often promote.

**Theme 5: Common traits of traditional healers of Indigenous lineage.**

Though not a question that is directly responding to the codes of conduct, *what motivated the Indigenous healers to become involved in the area of work?* contained some common threads that help us understand why their work is important to them. One hundred percent of Indigenous respondents have been practicing since being taught the traditions of healing during their childhood. Their work has become their way of life and is not a side income. Other comments about motivations included the following:

- “I have a special interest in healing energy and a very strong belief that we can heal ourselves without [pharmaceutical] medicine.”
- “I am fulfilled by the ability to help others and proud to continue traditions from my culture.”
- “Openness to share their gifts with those who need healing and seek experiences.”
- “Involves personal hands-on experience and deeper connect compared to handcrafts or dance which is less intrusive.”
- “I was born in Thailand and learn many kinds of original Thai cultural.”

**Theme 6: When to take traditional practices off the spa menu.**

Even global experts working the field and who say yes to the earlier question about whether spa tourism has the potential to protect cultures, note that there are times that certain ceremonies
are not suited for tourists. Monitoring of spas is important because from time to time practices may need to be removed from spa menus of services. A couple examples of this follow:

- “I have had first hand experience with training spas in Indigenous treatments and they did not last long on the menu because the environment was not conducive and the practitioners did not understand the underlying spiritual principles.”

- Another respondent stated that the use of the word “spa” for marketing should not be allowed when the facility is simply using the term to sell sex tourism or promote prostitution as this has potential to give spas negative public perception.

Respondents were given the following background information then asked a question. “Robbins and Dewar (2011), through their research of Canadian Indigenous practices, affirm that in order for traditional knowledge to be maintained and to develop, it has to be practiced (p.1). Do you feel spa and wellness tourism, if practiced authentically, is a means to maintain the traditions?” Four Indigenous and seven non-Indigenous responded by saying “yes”. There were zero who responded with “no” and two indigenous respondents stated that it depends on the situation (one of these is overlapping with the yes category also). The experts expressed certainty that practicing authentic spa tourism helps contribute to the conservation of Indigenous traditions.
The following are quotes that accompanied the yes/it depends responses:

- “These are treasures and should be carried on. Spa and wellness tourism are ideal vehicles.”
- “Spa spaces are important; the spa is helping preserve traditional techniques.”
- “Spas are places to learn techniques that are very important alternative healing therapies.”
- “Tourism does help a little bit and it is a very important element as it highlights the best of what we have but the continuity is not entirely dependent on tourism.”
- “It inspires them to at least know about the traditions. Oral traditions; there are not really many books that go in depth.” (The second part of the statement about limited book documentation reiterates what Struthers et al, 2004 noted).

Next I asked respondents if they believe there are any scenarios when Indigenous-inspired healing treatments should not be shared in spa tourism settings?

Of the non-Indigenous experts, six said “yes” and two said “no”. From the panel of Indigenous respondents three said “yes” and one said “no” for a total of three “no” and eight “yes”. This is significant and will link to the final codes of conduct in that it confirms the
importance of empowering indigenous communities to say “no” if they do not feel the spa tourism will bring a positive benefit.

![Pie chart showing responses to the question: Are there scenarios when Indigenous healing should not be shared via tourism?](image)

Figure 4. Are there scenarios when Indigenous healing should not be shared via tourism?

Comments in response to this question are as follows:

- “Many scenarios! When they are not authentic; when they are offensive to the native culture; when they have been offered in spite of objections; when there is no real linkage.”
- “Unless it is done by representative of indigenous group.”
- “I have had first hand experience with training spas in Indigenous treatments and they did not last long on the menu because the environment was not conducive and the practitioners did not understand the underlying spiritual principles. A spiritual aspect is very important in doing hands-on work with people. Not religious but spiritual.”
- “Temazcal [traditional Mexican sweat lodge ceremony] are becoming more like a show; they prioritize the money over respecting the tradition.”

A couple of in-depth conversations around the question Are there scenarios when Indigenous healing should not be shared via tourism? are as follows:
One Indigenous healer responded “no”; “I come from times when everything had to be kept in secret [restricting what ceremonies are shared]. We have passed this time.” The healer went on to state that it is now important to share these traditions because they belong to all not just individual community members from the lineage.” Ayni is a Quechua word meaning reciprocity or cosmic law: In current times, some of that Ayne includes money from tourists who pay for experiences to offer an exchange to the healer. In past, the Anye may have been in the forms of the healer getting other things he or she needed to live, but now money is becoming an acceptable form of exchange. The respondent went on further to explain that since the oral traditions are being shared less and elders are passing away without passing along knowledge before they die in many places around the globe, sharing the practice is important to help community members remember it and also allow others who are in need of the healing to benefit.

Another Indigenous person answered “yes” to the question of whether there are times when ceremony should not be shared. She brought up a health and safety issue that should be considered as a warning of why traditions should not always be openly offered by anyone uninitiated in traditional ways. In a rare, but important example to take note of, the 2009 sweat lodge deaths in Arizona made international news when a non-Indigenous person was leading a wellness retreat for tourists, but he did not take into consideration the intensity of the heat in the sweat lodge (Mehl-Madrona, 2010). Three of the 50 plus participants died of conditions related to excess heat and lack of hydration. Some Indigenous people felt this was a misuse of their sacred sweat lodge ceremony: “James Ray’s ceremony in Sedona was not traditional, was not a sweat lodge, and was not conducted in a spiritual manner”; since there has never been a documented death of a sweat lodge that was led by an Indigenous facilitator, the deaths indicate the importance of understanding a ceremony before practicing it (Mehl-Madrona, 2010, p. 609).
While the question of *Are there scenarios when Indigenous healing should not be shared via tourism?* was not resolved unanimously through the sample of respondents, the responses do show a trend towards Indigenous people being more open to sharing traditional ceremony for the purpose of healing. The increased openness is an evolution since the 2007 Honey and Thullien research, which revealed that most Indigenous groups wanted the opportunity to restrict sharing certain ceremonies. The shift towards more desire to share is not a surprise because as Munsterer (1950) and Donohoe (2011) have shown, culture is not static. The codes of conduct resulting from my work err on the side of the precautionary by validating that Indigenous communities have the right to deny sharing of particular customs. The point underscores that an increasing number of Indigenous groups are seeing the value in sharing outside of their communities for the benefit of retaining the traditional practice, earning needed revenue for the communities and helping outside clients with the therapeutic or restorative benefits of the wellness practice.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Case for Action

As was highlighted in the themes derived from my interviews, the timing is right for encouraging a set of agreed-upon codes of conduct to keep up with the growth in spa and wellness tourism inspired by Indigenous culture. With the increased demand for alternative healing and the wellness tourism (Global Spa Summit LLC, 2011) there will continue to be an ever-growing demand put on spas to be developed with a menu of services that includes Indigenous practices. Based on the primary and secondary data, the codes of conduct (see Chapter 6) provide user-friendly guidelines to help practitioners in designing products, training staff, delivering high levels of customer service and circumventing exploitation or disrespect to Indigenous peoples. The results also open the opportunity to create additional dialogue related to these topics.

Most respondents and the literature stated that a high level of importance must be placed on giving credit to the culture from which the spa and wellness practices are inspired. The education may come in the form of training practitioners, interpretive story telling to clients much like tour guides do, describing the cultural heritage in a spa menu of services, brochure website and or on signage around the spa facility. The education component will to maintain the integrity of the origins of a spa treatment. Authentic capacity building is also a must so that those carrying out the practices properly follow protocol.

Finally, in response to Johnson’s (2006) question Is the sacred for sale? my research answers in the affirmative that it is indeed for sale given the current interest in, and niche area of, indigenous-inspired spa tourism. In response to the question Should the sacred be for sale?, most respondents in my study agreed that the sharing of sacred or spa treatments is not only acceptable
but quite beneficial to the local communities; however, the spa should be operated with several
caveats or conditions as listed in the codes of conduct. There is a difference between selling a
handcrafted product and spa cultural experience since the latter includes, as one respondent
stated, “interactions with such as body, spirit and mind”. Thus precaution must be taken to
ensure safety and personal space is respected within a spa environment to maintain integrity of
the practice.
Chapter 6: Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Indigenous-Inspired Spa Tourism (a working document)

Codes of Conduct Background

The following is a collection of Codes of Conduct for Indigenous-Inspired Spa and Wellness Tourism developed using the primary research from this project as well as the secondary research, most notably *Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities* edited by Honey and Thullen (2007).

The codes of conduct are intended to provide guidance and direction for indigenous healers as well as spa and wellness facility planners, developers, owners, managers, practitioners, associations and others who make decisions related to incorporating traditional healing therapies from other cultures to share with tourists or outside clients. These codes of conduct make up a working document in order to invite input from stakeholders beyond those who participated in the initial round of research. At the time of publication there were no global accreditation bodies for indigenous-inspired spas, therefore the codes are voluntary yet highly encouraged.

It should also be noted that among Indigenous cultures around the world, individual healing practices vary greatly from one area to another. As such these codes are designed to generally apply to all regions then specific communities may make additional recommendations relevant to their local customs or values.

Indigenous-Inspired Spa

The draft working definition of *Indigenous-Inspired Spa* that came out of this research is:

**Indigenous-Inspired Spa** [in-dij-uh-nuh s in-spah-yuh rd spah]

Noun: A spa that ethically integrates practices, which are derived in whole or partially from Indigenous well-being and healing traditions.
Definition of spas: “places devoted to overall well-being through a variety of professional services that encourage the renewal of mind, body and spirit” (International Spa Association, 2015).

**Codes of Conduct Pledge**

As indigenous-inspired spa planners / managers / service providers, we pledge to adhere to the following codes of conduct.

**A) Honouring the traditional culture and ethics**

- Providing the right to informed consent for Indigenous peoples;
- Ensuring that sacred, ceremonial and culturally significant sites / areas are preserved, respected and protected from destructive or exploitative development;
- Inviting input from Indigenous groups. They have the right to recommend that practices in a facility be discontinued at any time if they feel delivery of the traditions is disrespectful or exploitive;
- Ensuring that the services being offered very clear to the public to avoid ambiguity. Relevant governance agencies may ban or close spa businesses that are offering illegal services such as sex tourism or prostitution;
- Being open to vetting or monitoring by third parties. If they fail to comply with Indigenous guidelines the practice may be forced to discontinue;
- Acknowledging spa practises that are interconnected with environmental conservation when applicable; and
- Ensuring honest marketing and promotion of the experiences to truthfully represent the culture and its roots;
B) **Product development and training**

- Engaging Indigenous consultation to provide input when developing spa or wellness products around traditional ceremony or practices;
- Allowing spa practitioners the option to offer the treatments that most interest them to avoid sharing a practice they do not have a concern or understanding for;
- Empowering spa practitioner to safely adjust the service depending on the physical conditions of the client;
- Complying with regulations of Indigenous treaties in their jurisdiction of operation;
- Ensuring visitors are aware of relevant requirements or protocol for the traditional sites or respectful actions they should take;
- Integrating education for clients by way of story telling to ensure integrity of origin;
- Ensuring health and safety is addressed. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to facilitate an experience that is healing rather than harming;
- Using the most qualified Indigenous healer available to guide the facility with training the spa practitioners and ensuring protocol is understood by trainees;
- Considering a visiting practitioner program that bring in qualified traditional healers to train in the spa;
- Developing the facilities to reflect the sense of place and Indigenous culture as genuinely as possible in the ambiance by including elements of culturally appropriate spa architecture, art, integration of landscape with nature-based elements, body products, music, local food and beverage, décor, spa staff member attire, etc.; and
- Considering honouring the traditional element of water in the spa setting, unless water conservation or restrictions are in effect. Integration of water may come in the form of a
fountain, experiencing a nearby waterfall or integrating healing bath or cleansing as an option at the spa. (The word “spa” comes from Latin roots "Salus Per Aquam” meaning healing through water).

C) The client experience

• Greeting the client in a traditional manner making them feel welcome and comfortable;
• Keeping cultural healing experiences as original as possible when integrating for a client setting;
• Telling the story of the tradition to the client--on marketing materials prior to arrival, around the facility and orally from staff members;
• Including descriptions of the experiences so clients understand what to expect prior to the spa therapy session;
• Setting boundaries so when tourists make requests, the practitioner has the right to say “no” to keep the integrity of the tradition;
• Seeking understanding about herbs, plants, culture and natural healing methods and ensure all health and safety issues are addressed. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to facilitate an experience that is healing rather than harming;
• Considering membership in a regional or global association or accreditation body to align with codes of conducts in professionalism, health, client privacy and confidentiality;

D) Local empowerment and philanthropy

• Ensuring local empowerment through capacity building and allowing Indigenous people to have influence in the spa or wellness facility;
• Supporting younger indigenous populations to increase their knowledge in traditional healing arts;
• Supporting local environmental conservation efforts to help sustain the local region;
• Following local employment regulations to ensure fair exchange for the practitioner’s services; and
• Incorporating philanthropic activities into the business model in order to give back and provide support to local community needs; this is a meaningful way to show appreciation for using their cultural traditions in the facilities.

Codes of Conduct Credit

The above Codes of Conduct have been compiled and condensed from respondents of the 2014/2015 research compiled by Laura Ell. There was also considerable influence coming out of the literature review, most notably from the Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Tourism and Indigenous & Local Communities edited by Honey and Thullen in 2007 which is a collection of indigenous group declarations and tourism codes of conduct.

Feedback on the Codes of Conduct

To provide input or recommended edits to the Compilation of Codes of Conduct for Indigenous-Inspired Spa Tourism please email Laura Ell. It is intended that the codes will go through iterations as more day spas and destination spas integrate them into practice.
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Summary

Western society highly influences Indigenous cultures. If my study were conducted a generation from now it would likely provoke different responses. The dynamism of culture that I have presented here is a cultural snapshot from 2015.

The semi-structured interview approach based on a modified shortened Delphi method was highly suitable in helping me to gain insight into the problem of collecting codes of conduct for culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism. The study was successful in responding to the primary and secondary questions. The main goal was to address the problem, what are relevant codes of conduct for spas that integrate Indigenous traditional healing techniques? The question was addressed through the respondent contributions and my analysis of their comments against current literature. The comprehensive compilation of stakeholder-endorsed, culturally sensitive spa and wellness codes of conduct can be found in Chapter 6. Results will also be disseminated internationally to support the progress of the global spa industry.

In addition to my primary question, two secondary questions arose during the literature review, prior to the data collection and they also served to guide my research method. It is useful to return to these questions and evaluate how my study helps to answer them: first, how is the commodification of traditional healing practices viewed by various stakeholders including Indigenous communities, spa developers, academics and consumers? A majority of respondents stated that benefits of sharing the cultural practices outside of their communities outweighs the risks, if spas use the recommendations within the codes of conduct to ethically and respectfully offer the practices to spa clients. The risks of commodification come when the individuals sharing the practice are not properly trained, or if the exchange is motivated more by economics than by a desire to share the culture or help bring wellness to the recipients. The Indigenous
Peoples’ Plan Of Implementation On Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa (2002) addresses exploitation similarly in its codes of conduct (Honey & Thullen, 2007).

The second question, *is cultural storytelling part of the solution to positive growth in authentic culturally infused spa and wellness tourism?* Building on what Honey and Thullen (2007), Chang, et al. (2006), Hodge, Pasqua, Marquez, & Geishirt-Cantrell (2002) and Yan-ping (2006) have revealed about storytelling being part of the solution to positive growth in authentic, culturally-infused spa and wellness tourism, 100% of the study respondents stated the importance of education or informing clients of practice. Several respondents used the terms story, storytelling or interpretation to describe means by which to inform clients about the heritage component of their spa experiences.

**Research Contributions**

The results of the study indicate that there is desire to maintain high standards to create a more authentic experience for clients, and if this does not take place then there are several risks. It is a win-win-win scenario to follow the codes of conduct developed with the respondents help. Indigenous people win because they earn revenue for work in meaningful jobs in which they have pride because they are helping others and sharing their cultural heritage gifts of healing. Spa tourism operations win because they offer a quality product that is in demand. Spa clients win because they have cross-cultural experiences complete with interpretive storytelling and healing, which addresses symptoms that result from our highly stressed society.

There are two distinct areas of contribution arising from this research. First, it informs scholarship around sustainable tourism, green spas and indigenous-inspired spa and wellness tourism. The latter had limited codes of conduct prior to my work. Second, my work supports the industry by providing practical guidelines in the form of codes of conduct, which will help in operationalizing spas and applies to new and existing businesses. My work helps in raising
awareness and framing discussions. As seminal work on codes of conduct in indigenous-inspired spa and wellness tourism, I look forward to this research acting as a catalyst for discussion.

The rich data coming out of my research project provides Indigenous groups with guidance about best practices for sharing their traditions, while protecting their cultural practices in spa and wellness tourism operations. This information can help such groups avoid exploitation, and it will support local communities to reinforce their rights. It is my intention that the study will provide guidance to both academics and professionals so such individuals and organizations can utilize the data to guide them in better spa and tourism management plans, research agendas, best practices, codes of conduct and other spa tourism-related advancements relevant to cultural sensitivity and sustainable development (Donohoe, 2011).

**Limitations**

Research in the area of spa and wellness tourism is quite limited; therefore it offers both opportunity and challenges. There are several areas I became interested in exploring to help meet industry and research demands; however, I also appreciate that a focused research project with a reasonable scope is important. For this reason I restricted my research to codes of conduct. Future research may expand upon the work in order to gain insight into more specific issues based on Indigenous traditions specific to targeted geographic regions.

One of the greatest challenges with this research was in acquiring a highly diverse sample of Indigenous peoples. They are, in some cases, challenging to access geographically, and communication was at times limited due to language barriers. Naturally, there are populations of traditional healers who have moved to busier centers and have learned English, so there are opportunities to access these populations more easily. I employed creative tactics and used
translators and a research assistant in one case to reach the key informants in this population to ensure a successful study.

Additional limitations that emerged as I conducted and analyzed the research centered around terminology. For spa and tourism industry practitioners, the industry jargon and niche nature of this topic made it difficult for some respondents to understand some questions within the study so they requested clarification and in a few cases, struggled to articulate responses. The open-ended questions allowed me to clarify for respondents in order to give them more understanding and insights, and enable them to respond when needed. Had I used a quantitative, closed-ended questions I expect the results would have been less valuable. Adding to the above-mentioned challenge of a lack of agreed-upon industry terms, a number of respondents who participated were not native English speakers and thus the limited comprehension in a few instances was interpreted and clarified. However, there is a chance that I made some minor interpretative errors during the process of editing their grammar.

As I progressed through the work it was clear that the study did not focus on non-Indigenous spa practices that do include cultural elements. For example, salt grottos and Roman or Greek baths and hydrotherapy are not necessarily from Indigenous tribal lineages in the sense of those terms today. However, they do have similar traits in that they are ancient traditional practices with culturally distinct characteristics that, from the spa client perspective, would likely be classified as a similar type of cultural spa and wellness. This shall be where I conduct future research.

Finally, it also worth noting that with globalization, many Indigenous peoples are beginning to intermingle and have a more diverse profile that is at times challenging to distinguish (Durie, 1995 as cited in Cunningham, 2003). The issue may have affected the study
results to some degree and it will most likely become increasingly challenging for researchers in the future as spa therapies become more hybridized the same way we see happening in the culinary arts, for example Asian-Italian fusion cuisine or the ways in which “the new Yoga of the West” (Ross, 1990, p. 146) is being hybridized to suit modern social and western cultural demands.

Future Research Opportunities

As mentioned in limitations above, there exists an opportunity to expand the scope of research to include cultural spas which are not necessarily based on Indigenous peoples, but rather on other elements of past and present culture. I aspire to write case studies of Indigenous spa therapies specific to targeted geographic regions to understand the challenges and successes more in-depth. As noted by Martha Honey, it would also be valuable to differentiate the codes of conduct relevant for both day spas compared to destinations spas from a codes of conduct point of view (personal communication, June 15, 2015).

Final Thoughts

In closing, I reiterate what was stated by Honey at Thullen in 2007. Standards and resources are needed so that tourism does not exploit Indigenous peoples; promotion of codes of conduct in itself is not a solution to all problems, but rather the codes need to guide improvement and advance best practices. One of my expert respondents summarized the value this work offers by saying cultural traditions “are treasures and should be carried on. Spa and wellness tourism are ideal vehicles.”
References


Appendix

Research Instruments

The following contains the invitation letter with consent as well as the two interview / questionnaire instruments that were used with respondents.

**Letter of invitation including Informed Consent and Conflict of Interest Survey**

Informed Consent for Participation in the Study of Culturally Sensitive Spa and Wellness Tourism

This brief survey requests your consent for participation in a study about culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism. It asks you to agree to allow the researcher to study your responses and use your comments to enhance understanding of the topic. The short questionnaire starts with background information about the research we are conducting and then it lets you know how your responses will be used, should you agree to the study, while keeping your identity anonymous.

Royal Roads University [Insert date]

**Title: Codes of Conduct for Culturally Sensitive Spa and Wellness Tourism**

My name is Laura Ell and I am a Masters student in the Interdisciplinary Studies program at Royal Roads University. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Joe Pavelka, PhD on culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism. As part of my thesis research, I am interviewing spa and wellness tourism professionals such as planners and managers to discover their perspectives on codes of conduct that ensure respect to Indigenous cultures while delivering a quality experience to spa clients. The purpose of the study is to investigate recommended codes of conduct for culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism. I understand that you play a key role in the spa and wellness sector; therefore we have a few short screening questions to determine if you qualify to participate in this important study.

**Version 1 - Practitioner or Academic**

1) Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes or No
2) Do you have a minimum of 1 year of experience in connection with at least one spa or wellness facility that offers healing modalities inspired by traditional Indigenous practices? Yes or No
3) So you have at least one professional credential confirming experience in the spa and wellness or Indigenous healing modalities? Yes (please state name of credential _____________ ) or No
4) Do you have a respect for and an understanding of culturally sensitivity regarding Indigenous people? Yes or No
5) Can you confirm that you have no documented charges or allegations against you from Indigenous groups claiming to be exploited or disrespected? Yes or No
6) Do you agree to participate in an interview of up to 30 minutes (in addition to this pre-screening survey)? Yes or No

Version 2- Indigenous Representative

1) Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes or No
2) Do you come from an Indigenous lineage / blood line by birth? Yes or No
3) Do you have at least 3 years of experience in traditional healing modalities that are related to your cultural heritage? Yes or No
4) Do you have an understanding to speak on behalf of what your culture sees as respectful and acceptable sensitive practices to its peoples?
5) Do you agree to participate in an interview of up to 30 minutes (in addition to this pre-screening survey)? Yes or No

If they answered “No” to any of the above share this message;

Thank you for participating the pre-screening, unfortunately one or more of the criteria for participating was not met so we are not able to invite you to the next stage of the study.

Sincerely,

Laura Ell

Royal Roads University, Masters in Interdisciplinary Studies

(if they answer “Yes” to all of the above proceed)

Congratulations, you passed the first phase of our qualifying survey as an expert and we would like to invite you to participate in our online survey to share your perspectives. We only have a few more questions.

Conflict of Interest

We assure you that you are free not to participate and have the right to withdraw at any time without prejudice to pre-existing entitlements. Whether or not you choose to participate will have no negative consequences. At this stage, we would like to be transparent that there is not a presence of apparent, actual or potential conflicts of interest on the part of researchers, our institutions or sponsors.

Do you have any questions to ask at this time?

[comment box]

Next we would like to provide some reminders and overview of the survey process:
• I will be setting up times to conduct a telephone interview at a time convenient for you.
• Again as a reminder, involvement in this interview is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participation in this study.
• The calls will be recorded but recordings will be kept secured in a locked cabinet and your name will never be published or associated with any responses that you make.
• The questions are around your motivation for working in the field as well as what your think are best codes of conduct in culturally respectful spa and wellness tourism.
• You may decline to answer any of the interview questions you do not wish to answer and may terminate the interview at any time.
• The data collected will be kept in a secure location and disposed of in 5 years time.
• Do you have any questions at this time? If you think of any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please feel free to contact my Thesis supervisor, Joe Pavelka, PhD.
• I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a Royal Roads Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours.
• After all of the data have been analyzed, you will receive an executive summary of the research results upon request.

By submitting this form you are indicating that you have read the description of the study and that you agree to the terms as described:

I agree to participate in a research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences. (Please note that once comments are given and they become part of an anonymous data set it may no longer be withdrawn.)

Yes No

I grant permission for the data generated from this interview to be used in the researcher's publications on this topic and understand that answers to be documented digitally then saved for purpose of review by the researcher.

Yes No

I grant permission for the researcher to use my contribution to the interview / survey in aggregate or anonymous statement and understand that no statements will be attributed to my name.

Please type your name in the box below to indicate agreement to participate in this study.

[ ]
Please share your email address here if you would like a copy of this consent letter:

[comment box]

End of Questionnaire. Thank you for your time.
If you agreed to the above we will be contacting you soon to proceed with the research study.

**Principal Investigator:**
Laura Ell
Royal Roads University, Masters in Interdisciplinary Studies

**Research Supervisor:**
Joe Pavelka, PhD

Spa and Wellness Expert Interview Guide

**Intro script:** According to the SRI International, wellness tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors globally worth US $439 billion. In parallel with this movement, there is also an increased demand for spas to offer healing modalities inspired by traditional Indigenous knowledge and healing practices, as individuals want to connect to traditional knowledge and use natural remedies to become more balanced. The research work is designed to help determine global best practices for culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism. The goal is to ensure high standards and respect to the local communities from which traditions are being borrowed. We have identified you as an expert in culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism and as such we would ask you to respond to the following questions. We thank you for helping participate in this important study. We will make all finally research results available to you upon request and we respect your privacy so will keep individual responses anonymous when compiling final results.

*If you have questions or suggestions on this process contact*

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**Version 1- Practitioner or Academic**

**Culturally Sensitive Spa and Wellness**

1. Please explain what motivated you to get involved in spa tourism incorporating Indigenous healing practices?

   (if market demand is an answer ask why types of demographics are demanding it; if personal interests ask for more information, etc.)

2. How does Indigenous-inspired spa tourism compare to other types of cultural tourism such as handcrafts, dance and other traditional ceremony sharing? (Their response may lead to a discussion or more questions)
3. Please explain what codes of conduct you practice or feel are most important for spas that are offering Indigenous-inspired spa therapies. (Their response may lead to a discussion or more questions, for example we may discuss story telling as a means of sharing history)

4. Robbins and Dewar (2011), through their research of Canadian Indigenous practices affirm that, “in order for traditional knowledge to be maintained and to develop, it has to be practiced (p.1). a) Do you feel spa and wellness tourism, if practices authentically, is a means to maintain the traditions? __________ 
   b) Do you believe there are any scenarios when Indigenous inspired healing treatments should not be shared in spa tourism settings? If so please explain (Their response may lead to a discussion or more questions)

5. Please list any international spas that, in your opinion model a high level of cultural sensitivity while offering traditionally Indigenous inspired healing practices:
   1. ______ (name of spa or wellness facility) ______ (web address) ______
   2. ______ (name of spa or wellness facility) ______ (web address) ______
   3. ______ (name of spa or wellness facility) ______ (web address) ______
   4. ______ (name of spa or wellness facility) ______ (web address) ______

6. Please share any additional comments that you would like to contribute regarding your experiences or opinions in the topics covered today?

Demographics
1. Name of the spa or wellness organization that you represent if applicable: ________________________________
2. Web address (URL) of the spa or wellness organization that you represent if applicable: www.________________________
3. What is your year of birth? (____)
4. Which gender describes you best? (          )
5. What is your current location of residence? (village/city, region, country) _____________________
6. How would you describe your ethnicity or cultural background? (optional) _______________________

This is the end of the survey; thank you. We appreciate your sharing your time and thoughts on this topic of culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism.

Version 2- Indigenous Representative

Culturally Sensitive Spa and Wellness
1. Please explain what motivated your interests in sharing traditional Indigenous healing practices with people outside of your community?

(if market demand is an answer ask why types of demographics are demanding it; if sense of helping others, ask for more information about health benefits, if for personal passion ask for details, etc.)

2. Please describe the viewpoint or philosophy of the traditional healing methods and traditions that your culture promotes (for example we have a strong focus on plant medicine, respect for the earth, use of healing oils, sweat or steam baths, etc)

3. How does Indigenous-inspired spa tourism compare to other types of cultural tourism such as handcrafts, dance and various other sharing of traditions and ceremony?

4. Please explain what codes of conduct you practice or feel are most important for spas that are offering Indigenous-inspired spa therapies. (Their response may lead to a discussion or more questions; for example we may discuss story telling as a means of sharing history)

5. Robbins and Dewar (2011), through their research of Canadian Indigenous practices affirm that, “in order for traditional knowledge to be maintained and to develop, it has to be practiced (p.1). a) Do you feel spa and wellness tourism, if practices authentically, is a means to maintain the traditions? 

   b) Do you believe there are any scenarios when Indigenous inspired healing treatments should not be shared in spa tourism settings? If so please explain (Their response may lead to a discussion or more questions)

6. Please list any international spas that, in your opinion model a high level of cultural sensitivity while offering traditionally Indigenous inspired healing practices:
   a. ___________________________ (name of spa or wellness facility) ___________________________ (web address)
   b. ___________________________ (name of spa or wellness facility) ___________________________ (web address)
   c. ___________________________ (name of spa or wellness facility) ___________________________ (web address)
   d. ___________________________ (name of spa or wellness facility) ___________________________ (web address)

7. Please share any additional comments that you would like to contribute regarding your experiences or opinions in the topics covered today?
Demographics

1. Name of the spa or wellness organization that you are associated with if applicable:

2. Web address (URL) of the spa or wellness organization that you represent if applicable:

3. What is your year of birth? (____)

4. Which gender describes you best? (___)

5. What is your current location of residence? (village/city, region, country)

6. How would you describe your ethnicity or cultural background? (optional)

_____________________________________________________________________

This is the end of the survey; thank you. We appreciate your sharing your time and thoughts on this topic of culturally sensitive spa and wellness tourism.