Shifting Away from Resource Based Economies: 
Tourism Development from a Planning 
Perspective on Vancouver Island

by 
Seamus Patrick McConville 
BA Humanities, University of Victoria, 2017.

Major Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the 
Requirements for the Degree of 
Master of Community Planning

in the 
Department of Community Planning, Faculty of Social Sciences

© Seamus McConville
Vancouver Island University
March 2020
Approval

Name: Seamus Patrick McConville
Degree: Master of Community Planning
Title: Shifting Away from Resource Based Economies
       Tourism Development from a Planning Perspective
       On Vancouver Island.
Examining Committee: Chair: Graham Sakaki, MCP.
                     Instructor, Master of Community Planning.

Graham Sakaki
Supervisor
Instructor, Master of Community Planning.

Katherine Worsley
Committee Member
Co-Ordinator, Cowichan Lake
Chamber of Commerce.

Mallory Marrs
Committee Member
Visitor Councillor, Cowichan Lake
Chamber of Commerce.

Date Defended: March 16th, 2020
Date Approved: March 16th, 2020
Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

a) Human research ethics approval from the Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board; or

b) Advance approval of the animal care protocol from the Vancouver Island University Animal Care Committee; or

c) Has conducted this research as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance of the author’s involvement.

A copy of the application has been filed with the Research Ethics Board at Vancouver Island University and inquiries may be directed to that authority.

Vancouver Island University
Nanaimo, British Columbia

Updated Spring 2017
Abstract

Tourism has often been cited as the next economy for small communities and regions on Vancouver Island to tilt towards in the wake of a declining forestry industry. With development of such an undertaking, there are numerous opportunities and unique challenges for communities to meet.

Utilizing the Cowichan Lake region on Vancouver Island, this Major Project investigates how communities shift from rural resource-based economies to those based in tourism and services, the people involved and what needs to be done in order to develop such industries. The project has key takeaways tailored to the Cowichan Lake region, with themes discovered being applicable to many other Vancouver Island communities. The project focusses on how planners can help facilitate such development.

Keywords: Tourism Development; Vancouver Island; Forestry; Tourism; Community Planning; Cowichan Valley
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this major project to my overly supportive Mother and Father, Emilia and Kevin McConville. I'd also like to dedicate it to my grandparents; Nonna and Papa Ruperto. Thank you all for supporting me through an undergraduate degree and now a master’s degree, and for encouraging me to keep going when things got dicey. Thank you for always being there.

I’d also like to dedicate this work to Grandpa and Grandma McConville. While you never got to see me in university, you were always in my thoughts.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisor, Graham Sakaki as well as his staff at MABRRRI for their support through this project. Being one of the biggest things I’ve taken on in my life, I particularly appreciated the guidance from Graham, considering the fact that he had also completed his Master of Community Planning at Vancouver Island University.

I would also like to thank all the participants who graciously took time out of their days to answer my questions about tourism in the Cowichan Lake region. I would also like to acknowledge the enthusiasm, support and kind words of the people of the Town of Lake Cowichan, whose genuine friendliness and interest in this work made the process that much more enjoyable.

Maps throughout this document were created with the QGIS software. Please see the Mapping Reference section for further information on data copyright and citations.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my friends, both new and old, for their support during my schooling. It was nice to have people to rant into the void when I needed a level head to bounce ideas off. You know who you are!
# Table of Contents

Ethics Statement ............................................................................................................. 2  
Abstract ........................................................................................................................... 3  
Dedication ....................................................................................................................... 4  
Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................... 5  
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................ 6  
List of Figures .................................................................................................................. 8  
List of Acronyms .............................................................................................................. 9  
Glossary ........................................................................................................................ 10  
Executive Summary ...................................................................................................... 11  

## Chapter 1. Introduction .............................................................................................. 13  
1.1. Case Study Region ............................................................................................... 13  
1.2. Introduction to Tourism and Community Development ...................................... 15  
1.3. Research Questions ............................................................................................. 17  
1.4. Research Objectives ............................................................................................ 18  
1.5. Contribution to Research ...................................................................................... 18  

## Chapter 2. Literature Review ................................................................................... 19  
2.1. Economic Resilience ............................................................................................ 19  
2.2. Community Development .................................................................................... 22  
2.3. Niche Tourism ..................................................................................................... 23  
2.4. Sense of Place ...................................................................................................... 26  
2.5. Rural Tourism ....................................................................................................... 28  
2.6. Networks in Tourism ............................................................................................ 30  
2.7. Tourism Wayfinding and Placemaking ................................................................ 33  
2.8. Carrying Capacity ............................................................................................... 35  
2.9. Tourism Planning ................................................................................................. 39  
2.10. Precedent Plans .................................................................................................. 42  
2.11. The Planner’s Role in Tourism ........................................................................... 47  
2.12. Analysis ................................................................................................................ 50  

## Chapter 3. Methodology .......................................................................................... 55  
3.1. Research Design .................................................................................................. 55  
3.2. Collection Methods ............................................................................................... 57  
3.3. Population Selection ............................................................................................. 59  
3.4. Regrets and Limitations ....................................................................................... 60  

## Chapter 4: Results and Findings .............................................................................. 62  
4.1 Importance of Tourism in the Lake Cowichan Region .............................................. 62  
4.2 Community Stakeholder Networking ...................................................................... 65  
4.3 Opportunities for Tourism Development ............................................................... 72
4.4 Challenges of Tourism Development ................................................................. 89

Chapter 5: Discussion ............................................................................................. 102
5.1 Summary of Findings ....................................................................................... 102
5.2 Main Takeaways ............................................................................................... 106
5.3 Further Work .................................................................................................... 114

References 117
Mapping References ............................................................................................... 125
  Licence Statements ............................................................................................... 125
  Data Citations ..................................................................................................... 125
Appendix A. Lake Cowichan Findings Booklet .................................................... 126
Appendix B. Recruitment Email ............................................................................ 158
Appendix C. Consent Letter .................................................................................. 159
Appendix D. Interview Questionnaire ................................................................. 162
Appendix E. Outreach Boards ............................................................................. 164
Appendix F. Survey for Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre. .................................... 168
List of Figures

Figure 1 Welcome sign to the Town of Lake Cowichan. ................................................ 11
Figure 2 Map of Cowichan Lake Region. ....................................................................... 14
Figure 3 Illustration of the Pacific Marine Circle Route on Southern Vancouver Island. .................................................................................................... 42
Figure 4 Outreach event in Lake Cowichan, September 2019. ...................................... 58
Figure 5 Visualization on response that tourism attracts permanent residents amongst participants. ................................................................. 64
Figure 6 Map of public water accesses in the region discovered by researcher. ........ 75
Figure 7 Floating Boardwalk in Arbutus Park, Youbou. .................................................. 76
Figure 8 Example of directional signage created by the community in Youbou............. 77
Figure 9 Tourist info kiosk in Mesachie Lake. ................................................................. 78
Figure 10 Road routes and surfacing of the Cowichan Lake Region. ......................... 81
Figure 11 Laketown Ranch, as seen from North Shore Road. ....................................... 84
Figure 12 Illustration of interviewees feelings around accommodations...................... 87
Figure 13 Zoning map of Youbou. Village Core zoning denoted by orange shading. .... 89
Figure 14 Underdeveloped public water access immediately south of Catalyst Weir. ... 93
Figure 15 Chart of some of the main actions a planner undertakes in tourism development. ................................................................. 105
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Initial components of the term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATV</td>
<td>All Terrain Vehicle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLEC</td>
<td>Cowichan Lake Education Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CVRD</td>
<td>Cowichan Valley Regional District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLVC</td>
<td>Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMO</td>
<td>Destination Marketing Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAA</td>
<td>Local Arts Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFT</td>
<td>Lake Cowichan, Electoral Area I and F and Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation Economic Development Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCP</td>
<td>Official Community Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOC</td>
<td>Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Constraints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MABRRI</td>
<td>Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTI</td>
<td>Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRDT</td>
<td>Municipal and Regional District Tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MVSU</td>
<td>Mobile Visitors Services Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIMC</td>
<td>Vancouver Island Motorsports Circuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VFR</td>
<td>Visiting Family and Relatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Region</th>
<th>Area around Cowichan Lake, Includes the Town of Lake Cowichan, Honeymoon Bay and Youbou.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Town</td>
<td>The Town of Lake Cowichan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ts'uubaa-asatx First Nation</td>
<td>Lake Cowichan First Nation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary

Figure 1 Welcome sign to the Town of Lake Cowichan.

This major project evaluates sentiments and requirements for the development of a tourism industry from a planning and economic development perspective within a Vancouver Island context. As many small communities look towards other sources of revenue to make up for the recent decline in long standing industries, planners and other municipal authorities will want to know what to look for when considering the development of tourism within their own jurisdiction.

Using the Lake Cowichan region as a case study, this major project evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of developing a tourism industry in a community which still has an active resource industry, albeit one which has seen decline in recent years. Using this region’s context, the research seeks to define the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and
constraints to developing tourism in a resource dependant community. Focus is also given to creating networks and developing partnerships between community stakeholders and groups to further develop tourism in the region.

Through an in-depth literature review, interviews with stakeholders and community outreach, a high-level understanding of developing a tourism industry in a smaller community has been established, with the outcome being specific recommendations tailored to the Cowichan Lake area. This document can be found in Appendix 1.

Being a major project, this work is focussed less on theory and more on secondary research and engagement to better understand community perceptions of tourism and economic development in the study location.
Chapter 1.
Introduction

1.1. Case Study Region

For the purposes of my research, I wanted to select an area on Vancouver Island whose primary industry had long been based in research extraction yet had not formulated a comprehensive tourism development strategy. From this, I chose the Lake Cowichan Region. For the purposes of this project, the Lake Cowichan area includes Mesachie Lake, Youbou, Honeymoon Bay, the Ts'ulua-aatx First Nation and the Town of Lake Cowichan. This area of study was determined due to its ease of access along paved provincial roads; and as a result, it does not consider the areas of Caycuse and Ditidaht First Nation, two communities on the south shore of the lake.

The Town of Lake Cowichan is a community adjacent the shores of Cowichan Lake, a large freshwater lake 30 kilometers long and nearly 50 meters deep on Southern Vancouver Island (About Cowichan Lake, 2010). The town is located 29 Kilometers from the City of Duncan, on Highway 18. Regionally, the community is 73 Kilometers from Nanaimo, and 90 kilometers from Victoria.

There are a multitude of communities that surround the lake. Along the south shore of the lake sits the small communities of Mesachie Lake, 6.5 kilometers from Lake Cowichan’s downtown, and Honeymoon Bay, 13 Kilometers from the downtown core. Further down South Shore Road is Caycuse, 28 kilometers from the community on a gravel road. The South Shore
Road connects to the Pacific Marine Road, a 62-kilometer paved road connecting the region to Port Renfrew and eventually Victoria.

Figure 2 Map of Cowichan Lake Region.

The Town of Lake Cowichan is its own municipality, governed by its own bylaws and civic infrastructure. The communities of Caycuse, Mesachie Lake and Honeymoon Bay are part of Electoral Area F of the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD,) while the Youbou Areas are part of Electoral Area I. The Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation has its own land use regulations and bylaws.

Population wise, results from the 2016 census state that the Town of Lake Cowichan has 3,226 residents inside its borders, with a further 30 residents living on the Ts’uubba-asatx Nation Reserve. The community of Youbou has 1,206, while Caycuse, Honeymoon Bay and
Mesachie Lake have 1,629 combined. Considering the communities within the boundaries of my study, the entire population of the study area is 6,071 (Statistics Canada, 2016).

The region still has a logging industry, with raw log extraction to feed forestry processing operations at Chemainus and Crofton. However, the lake is a prime summer destination for many mid-islanders, with summer cabins and campgrounds encircling the lake. These factors provide ample opportunity to study tourism development in the region, with just enough work being completed in order to create a solid foundation to base my research on.

From this, I collected data from various members of the community in this region, ranging from local officials to tourism development officials in order to gain insight to the context of tourism within the region. Overall, the goal of this project is to understand development of alternate economic drivers in smaller resource-based communities on Vancouver Island.

1.2. Introduction to Tourism and Community Development

The history of British Columbia has long been based in the extraction of resources. With the settling of the province in the 19th century, many of the communities we know today along Vancouver Island and elsewhere in the province had their origins in the resource industry (Robinson, 2010). While these industries boomed for much of the 20th century, the latter half of that period saw a steady decline in revenues brought in by the industry into the communities that this industry once provided vitality for. At one point during the 1990s, Vancouver Island communities saw at least 21% of their resident’s primary incomes depend on the forest industry (Markey & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2005, p. 65). With many
communities now having this fate befall them, communities needed to look towards new sources of income to keep their towns viable in order to stem the tide of movement to the larger urban centres of the region.

While the extraction of resources for many British Columbian communities slowly lost its viability to keep a community together, towns across the province sought to tap into their most renewable resource – the natural beauty around them (Province of British Columbia, 2012, p. 9). The tourism industry is also a significant contributor to the British Columbian economy. According to Destination BC, the tourism industry generated $5.4 billion dollars in 2017, making it the third largest contributor to the province’s GDP (Destination BC, 2019). There are many different factors and features to the tourism economy, with the features that a community looks to develop differing from town to town. Tourists are looking to embrace an “authentic” experience, an idea that communities have authenticity in their natural, undeveloped infrastructure (Nepal, 2008, p. 43). This desire puts many former resource communities in a prime position to capitalize on their natural splendor and increase their economic base through unique offerings based on their geographic realities. There is no limit on what can be embraced in order to develop this industry. A Vancouver Island example of this phenomenon is the former coal mining community of Cumberland, who developed its disused resource lands as mountain bike trails, becoming the de-facto capitol of mountain biking of the Island (Livingstone, 2017).

With local government now tasked with ensuring the vitality of their communities moving forward, questions exist as to what a municipality needs to do in order to ensure that their community remains vibrant and viable even after a major industry starts to decline or shut down. From this, the research looks through the context of community development and
tourism in order to understand the benefits, challenges and opportunities that may present themselves when considering the development of tourism in a region.

1.3. Research Questions

The challenge of developing tourism in communities which have been affected by economic downturn has been written about in other contexts. However, research in the context of Vancouver Island is limited, despite the prevalence of the tourism industry in the region. With such an important piece of the Vancouver Island economy, communities along the island may consider further development of tourism and wish to understand potential benefits and implications of developing a tourism industry in their community. From this, I posed the following research questions:

1. Are small, resource-based communities on Vancouver Island seeing an increased need to shift to tourism?

2. What are the challenges and opportunities that present themselves when developing such an industry?

3. What is the community planner’s role in the development of new industries, such as tourism?

4. What is the community’s perception of tourism in their community?

These questions were chosen to help highlight the intricacies of tourism development on Vancouver Island. With many smaller communities lacking resources and capacity in order
to fully undertake tourism development within their capacity, being able to understand the needed policies and stakeholders in order to develop tourism in smaller communities.

1.4. Research Objectives

The goal of this research is to better understand the process of tourism development in the context of a rural or small community. This will help understand some of the challenges which may arise as a result of the development of a tourism industry.

While the process of this research developed this academic work, a smaller, user friendly document has also been produced. This document is a distilled version of this work, and is intended for local officials, either with the Town of Lake Cowichan or Cowichan Valley Regional District to understand some of the main concerns and opportunities that exist when developing tourism in the region, Please see Appendix A to review this document.

1.5. Contribution to Research

This major project will provide insight into the development of tourism on Vancouver Island, an area which has minimal academic literature written about it. Furthermore, it has also not been written about in a planning context, with minimal understanding about the topic. The final project will also provide the Cowichan Lake region with some insights of community perception of the tourism industry in their region, and how communities react to the development of tourism in a smaller community.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Economic Resilience

With many coastal communities in British Columbia being affected by changes in industries and collapses of long-standing economic bases, it is important to understand the forces that cause the change in these communities. Often, the change can occur due to the collapse of a major economic base. Notable Canadian political economist Harold Innis classifies this main resource as a staple, or the resource that is a community’s reason for existence. For Innis, the linkages between his theory of the core, and periphery are based in a staple resource, with the large money that flows into the community as a result of the demand for the resource at the core means a community does not see the need to diversity when the boom is occurring (Barnes, Hayter, & Hay, 2001). This could explain why communities may not have considered the need for an economic backup plan in the past, with the prosperity of the extraction of resource seemingly limitless. This weakness is only brought to the forefront once that one industry experiences a decline and, in some cases, eventual death. This is forcing many communities in British Columbia to quickly work towards economic diversification.

In the case of industries in the United States, resiliency was still a very narrow focussed topic. In Cleveland, Ohio, economic resiliency was a focus on the same product with different factories producing the item for different costs, with those plants being turned up and turned down as needed (Wolman, Hill, St. Clair, & Wial, 2017). Naturally, this goes against the idea of sustainable economic development, as this model would not truly account for the
case where that industry would simply cease to exist. By focussing on simple tweaks to an already existing industry, Wolman et al argued that innovation in Cleveland was completely stifled, meaning that it could not fully adapt to the needs of the new economy. It is this need for constant innovation which is crucial to economic growth and development. From this, the City of Cleveland founded an economic development department which worked to bring tourism in the form of major league sports, as well as the rock and roll hall of fame into the downtown centre of the city; a move the authors noted took nearly thirty years to complete (Wolman et al., 2017). Because of that initial reluctance to consider anything different from manufacturing, a recovery from economic collapse was much harder to accomplish and became more protracted.

Communities also need to consider how a new industry will impact the community. The town of Golden, British Columbia saw expansion of the Kicking Horse Ski Resort at the same time their lumber mill closed. While there was no doubt that the added revenue from the ski resort expansion would improve the economic situation in the community, concern was given to the fact that the ski resort’s tax revenue would go towards the regional district, despite the town itself providing the services of which the ski hill and its visitors would draw upon (Reid, 2003). The expansion of the Ski Hill provided a much needed, new economic sector for a community that was suffering due to the loss of its mill. Here, the town undertook a planning process to gain the opinion of citizens, an exercise Reid criticized as being more about developing buy-in from residents as opposed to actually solving the issues around providing services to the expansion (Reid, 2003). While the municipality was proactive during a time of downfall, it solely focussed on being able to fill the economic void quickly as opposed to a thoughtful process which in turn deferred decisions to an undetermined time in the future;
something Reid argues is important to the longevity of the tourism industry in that region (Reid, 2003).

While communities elsewhere saw the steady declines and eventual closures of primary industries as a wakeup call to diversify their economies, communities on Vancouver Island did not immediately act upon this looming danger. This was due to the cycle of temporary shutdowns of saw and pulp mills; with that inaction due to the incorrect assumption the forestry industry had entered yet another temporary slump (Markey & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2005). By developing a more resilient economic structure with other sources of income, communities can avoid permanent decline by the loss of an industry. In the context of community economic development, this is known as Asset Based Development, where key weakness are defined within the economic structure, with a priority on development of other resources within the community, with the hopes of developing a level of self reliance that negates the need for rescue measures to be taken by senior governments (Markey & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2005). This offers a level of acknowledgement that a current industry within a community may be acting as the economic bases single point of failure, urging local authorities to consider what other resources their community has on offer. This can be very pronounced in Indigenous communities who may have only had the logging industry to fall back on; sharing that tendency to be complacent with forestry and having downturn providing the same realization to consider other industries as well (Markey & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2005).
2.2. Community Development

In order to develop a community, special focus must be paid to its downtown. By developing a downtown that citizens can be proud of, communities can use this momentum as a core part of building civic pride as well as growing their tourism industry (Chan et al., 2013). There can be a distinction between types of business districts within a community; with a central business district being where the daily interactions of residents and services occurs, while a tourism business district provides services that would be appealing primarily to tourists (Paradis, 2000). Perceptions of downtown between newcomers and long-term residents must be managed properly, especially when considering that both groups have an interest in an appealing downtown. In a case study in the United States, the tourists and newcomers were both very interested in the downtown of the community, while those who were native to the community understood the need to attract new business and users to the downtown in order to keep it viable (Paradis, 2000). When developing a downtown, there needs to be a construction of the sense of place, which is based in the sense of community. In the case of Picton, Ontario, the sense of place that was present in the artist community was leveraged by economic development planners as they worked to develop and market the community as a hive of artistic activity (Chan et al., 2013). In the cases of many small cities, communities attempt to preserve historical buildings and accent access to waterfront or other natural features, with challenges such as large abandoned retail buildings and underutilized public infrastructure acting as barriers (Robertson, 1999). These act as common-sense targets to work upon, especially when considering tourism. Small communities have been known to use historical features, such as courthouses and large museums as a larger heritage walk to draw tourists into their Central Business Districts (Robertson, 1999). If a community has a central,
major attraction to draw visitors to the downtown, then it could provide for a knock-on effect of developing the community for its residents. From this, tourism actors at a local and provincial level have worked to designate attractions and destinations, such as provincial parks and museums as “star attractions,” highlighting their tourism potential to the greater world (Ramsey & Malcolm, 2018). For some communities, this attraction is due to something uniquely related to their community and region. For example, a community in Manitoba based its star attraction around a fossil museum and the Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame (Ramsey & Malcolm, 2018). Of course, these attractions were only facilitated and made successful due to the physical infrastructure to host these two attractions, as well as the nearby existence of fossils to the community which made the museum relevant (Ramsey & Malcolm, 2018). In this case, the tourism industry and development of the surrounding areas was only facilitated once these two attractions were established and operational. From this, the community was able to capitalize on these attractions and offer an experience that other communities did not have. This being said, when developing a new industry such as tourism for a community, the risk remains of elites in the community being within the status quo, meaning that resistance towards change or solely relying on the aforementioned elites could be fatal when working towards revitalization (Markey & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2005).

### 2.3. Niche Tourism

Increasingly, specific niche activities and reasons for travel are becoming a focus in the development of tourism products in regions. The definition of niche tourism has evolved through the years, with the definition emphasising an optimum location exploiting uniqueness against its competitors, to being a product or destination serving a smaller market not served
by any competing products (Ali-Knight, 2010). Much in the same vein as tourism development, this model sees a region embrace a unique and underserved opportunity as they grow their tourism economy. From this, destinations can use large events, such as music festivals or gatherings in order to target these niches and drive traffic towards their community. A community in Italy worked to do this, by hosting an annual jazz festival, whose patrons in turn were then encouraged to visit other attractions that may be seen as of interest to those patrons (Mariani & Giorgio, 2017). From this, these events can then be leveraged by Destination Marking Organizations and local communities to create a brand for a region, further unifying stakeholder communities around the tourism product for the region (Mariani & Giorgio, 2017).

From these considerations, rural areas look to engage with unique offerings that may already be present, which could mean a lower barrier to the entry of the tourism field. In a study of rural areas, rural producers of agricultural products embraced these traditions in order to develop a small scale, unique tourism product that appealed to visitors looking for unique, food based experiences (Sidali et al., 2015). To this end, one of the challenges found by smaller producers who may want to market experiences on such properties as farms was a lack of co-ordination between producers and the greater regional tourism scheme, with fragmentation on offerings between farms providing a challenge between operators looking to develop a cohesive strategy (Sidali et al., 2015). For smaller producers creating a niche and trying to differentiate themselves from mass market and larger scale offerings, a sense of trust and reputation must be developed from a niche operation, something which may be done over social media or the internet (Lew, 2008). To this end though, this requires time, resources and knowledge of how to appropriately communicate over social media and the
internet, a challenge which smaller operators or communities may simply be unable to overcome (Lew, 2008).

A growing area of niche tourism involves Indigenous Communities. In British Columbia in 2019, Indigenous Tourism contributed nearly $705 million dollars towards the tourism sector in the province, with nations offering experiences such as canoe adventure tours that visit culturally significant sites or culinary experiences that showcase their nation’s cuisine (Ross, 2019). Allowing Indigenous perspectives and opportunities in tourism is an important and powerful undertaking for communities who traditionally have not had much of a say when it comes to tourism in their territories. One example of empowerment in Indigenous tourism is in a community in Alaska, which created an “Indigenized visitor code of conduct” for visitors coming to sites that were culturally sensitive to their community (Carr et al., 2016). By creating such conduct codes, the community was then able to offer further experiences that empowered their community and allowed for the industry to further support their community’s financial wellbeing (Carr et al., 2016). Once more, one of the challenges that Indigenous communities face when developing niche tourism experiences is community support and funding. While communities are generally receptive to Indigenizing the tourism experience, the Haida nation on Haida Gwaii found that plans to implement further Haida language signage and cultural experiences within the Provincial Parks on the archipelago struggled to gain the full amount of funding for the project to be sustainable (Whitney-Squire et al., 2018). This being said, the Haida Nation engaged with other, like minded businesses within their territories to help bring them up to market ready status, in order to ensure that their tourism offerings could be more complementary and sustainable, a situation that actually helped boost the nation’s own plans for language based events at the Haida Cultural Centre (Whitney-
Squire et al., 2018). While these operations and ideals are important to Indigenous communities, one area of political concern for the Haida was that a larger overarching indigenous placemaking exercise involving naming could be problematic in the eyes of the courts when it came to land claims issues, leading to a limitation of the project (Whitney-Squire et al., 2018). Indigenous tourism can provide an exceptional, unique experience to visitors of a place, providing it is done in a culturally sensitive way.

2.4. Sense of Place

The idea of sense of place is a phenomenon that has come into the vocabulary of planners over the course of the last forty years. At the core, the idea of a sense of place boils down to a few simple ideas coming together; space and meaning creating place, and a common identity that many can identify with (Stedman et al., 2006). The development of tourism in a community can have a significant impact on the sense of place that community members have with their own community. While one may assume that the region’s residents have a strong sense of place when developing their tourist ambitions, it has been found that this sense of place is distorted by a knowledge that their community is struggling, and that tourism is often the best way to develop a new brand and image for the community (Stylidis et al., 2014) Considering this, community members in one island town in Greece reported to researchers that they were most proud of their scenery and nightlife yet doubted the ability of their local authorities in order to bring their dreams of a tourism industry to full fruition (Stylidis et al., 2014).
Another example, from a separate island town on the island of Corfu also undertook their own development of their industry in the wake of the Greek economic crisis in the early 2010s. The small community of Arillias discovered that they had a significant waste problem in the community, caused by the collapse of infrastructure which had previously been facilitated by a series of closed resorts. Here, a group of citizens banded together to implement garbage drop off points, with the end result being a cleaner town and a happier populace (Skinner & Medway, 2017). While this project was very small scale, the citizens built community capacity and now had power to take on larger scale infrastructure projects, such as the rejuvenation of a beach which had been blocked multiple times by local authorities (Skinner & Medway, 2017). By conducting these operations, the citizens had revitalized an amenity that would not only attract tourists from the other resort towns on the island but provide themselves with an attraction that they themselves could be proud of.

On the other hand, there is also the sense of concern that residents in a region have become overrun by tourism, with a negative impact being had on their community’s wellbeing. This is seen in Barcelona, a city which has become known for its struggle to balance the needs of its citizens and a never-ending stream of visitors from around the world. In the case of Barcelona, housing costs in multiple districts in the city skyrocketed as newcomers arrived to experience the city. As a result of this, a group of frustrated residents founded a group called #EnsPlantem; designed to not only protest these grievances but also reclaim urban space for displaced residents (Mansilla & Milano, 2019). At the same time, the neighbourhoods affected by these changes also experienced a level of gentrification that not only appealed to new residents, but tourists as well. Many of these visitors from abroad found themselves becoming part of the fabric of one neighbourhood. In the District of Gracia, a
census showed that in 2016 18,582 foreigners had found themselves living amongst the neighbourhood’s residents, up from 1,941 foreigners in 1991 (Mansilla & Milano, 2019.) It was through this international flair that had now taken over the neighbourhood that the growth of a local festival, the Festa Major became more of an international sensation (Mansilla & Milano, 2019.) While the tourism boom to the neighbourhood did provide some benefits, it also lessened the charm that it had originally been known for.

2.5. Rural Tourism

It would be incorrect to assume that tourism occurs solely in larger centres. Often, a community or region will undertake a focus on alternate industries if their existing industries have ceased to provide a sustainable economic base (Reid, 2003). Tourism is often cited as an industry within rural Canadian contexts as a way to attract high capital investment and entrepreneurial classes, especially as communities shift away from more traditional industries such as forestry that are controlled from afar (Mair, 2006). As such, communities in Newfoundland have embraced the tourism industry, especially after their primary industry of fishing had collapsed. For example, residents on Fogo Island in Newfoundland reported that they enjoyed the growth of tourism in the communities, citing the fact that they could engage with new people visiting the community, all the while retaining residents who may have otherwise travelled to Alberta to work in the oil patch (Rockett & Ramsey, 2017). Here, the idea of tourism to this remote island is lauded by the community, especially considering it offers resiliency and reasons for people to stay in their home community. One challenge that was discovered by residents of the island was the development of infrastructure and opportunities for tourists to undertake in the region. While the residents of Fogo Island
appreciated that the increased revenues due to the industry had brought improvements to crumbling infrastructure, the residents had found that there was limited drive to take initiative to start-up businesses to capitalize on the tourism boom, even with financial support of a foundation (Rockett & Ramsey, 2017).

Authenticity in rural tourism is a topic that is often breached as well. Another case study in the Evangeline Region of Prince Edward Island investigated the role of authenticity in the development of tourism in their communities. Here, the article cites the creation of tourism opportunities as a way to preserve culture and community in the region, considering the fact that the increased tourism traffic contributed to the viability of bank and grocery stores in their communities, which in turn would keep the community cohesive (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). Building upon this, there is also the desire to develop networks between organizations and opportunities to demonstrate the local culture. From this, the community in this region had partnered with the local museum to fund an Acadian museum experience, complete with culturally sensitive events which promote and preserve the history of the Acadians on the island (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003). The traditions of the Acadians are not only preserved but displayed to tourists who are looking for an authentic experience of the way that people live on the island. However, when considering the development of tourism in these communities, outsider planners must also consider the community’s reactions to change to existing structures. Looking back at the example of Fogo Island, community members became very defensive when external consultants looked to expand upon the work that a local non-profit had already done to upgrade heritage sites and trails on the island (Rockett & Ramsey, 2017). In this case, the experience of distrust may have resulted from traditionally limited collaboration and engagement between stakeholder groups and tourism officials on the island.
This also could be due to the lack of previous tourism activities occurring on the island. Introducing a new industry such as tourism to an area can also come with its own anxieties. In a case study in Valemount, research determined that while residents were supportive of new resorts to bolster the tourism industry in the town, there was concern as to what could happen to the town’s affordability and environmental standing and upkeep (Nepal, 2008). Furthermore, the same study revealed that a level of disdain and cynicism exists towards the industry, with some residents believing that the jobs that tourist developments create would not provide a tangible benefit to the community (Nepal, 2008).

### 2.6. Networks in Tourism

The creation of tourism policies within communities requires a significant number of stakeholders to be brought together in order to develop the policy. In a case in Australia, a resort operator found that by only focusing on their operation and cutting out experiences nearby such as wineries and golf courses, the value of their resort in the eyes of prospective visitors dropped dramatically (Scott et al., 2008). It was for this reason that the same area cited working together as a priority, considering that many resources that tourism capitalizes upon are based in the community, with the lack of communication leading to a duplication of efforts (Scott et al., 2008). Naturally, by bringing together stakeholders and networking their efforts, they will become stronger and more likely to work together when developing a tourism industry.

These precedents provide an understanding of how organizations interface with each other in the community. In one study in Newfoundland and Labrador, community stakeholders
expressed concern over confusion on what organization was responsible for specific parts of the tourism industry; with these concerns grounded in making the most of limited tourism funding from the provincial government (Scott et al., 2008). With this exercise, the discovery was made that multiple tourism stakeholders in the community, whether public or private sector had almost identical concerns and would not have known if they had not communicated with each other (Scott et al., 2008). Furthermore, another study of tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador looked at stakeholders in the respective regions, in order to determine where potential conflicts could arise, and what challenges could present themselves to the development of the industry. After the stakeholders met, they realized that the issues of a lack of tourist accommodation, workforce availability and an adversarial relationship between operators were the primary issues that would be best addressed by forming a working group (Catano, Stoddart, Vodden, & Canadian Electronic Library (Firm), 2017).

Through networking, one can start to understand the intricate needs and ideals within the community. This would help navigate through the process of developing a plan for the community; finding out what is valued by the people that policies will affect. Tourism planning must be cognisant of various organizations and stakeholders that may want to be involved in the further development of tourism. This is where tourism networking theory is applicable, by tying together the local authorities who are in charge of a community, as well as tourism boards, tourism operators, restaurants and even mundane infrastructure ranging from airports to telecommunications operators (Paget, Dimanche, & Mounet, 2010). All the pieces help make a location desirable, but it can often be hard to get them to interface with each other. This interfacing makes up what is called the *Tourismscape*. This *Tourismscape* is essentially an organization of the actors and infrastructure that makes up the tourism industry in a
community, with the addition of the features that make the destination attractive (Paget et al., 2010). From this, the municipality must ask what those natural features are, what infrastructure and services exist within the community, and who must be involved in order to make this program a success.

In smaller, more rural communities, there is often a group of local stakeholders who can take leadership roles in developing infrastructure and attractions that would naturally lend themselves to growing an industry in a town. In a study that surveyed smaller communities throughout the United States, communities that had a local arts agency had more of an ability to program events such as music festivals and craft fairs that draw visitors to their respective region (Delconte et al., 2016). Building upon this, the study also found that of the downtowns which had a Local Arts Association (LAA) in their community experienced a higher likelihood of having a more authentic sense of place due to an LAA having a higher ability to network between those who want to showcase their arts (Delconte et al., 2016). Often, a community has a whole host of untapped experiences within their community, with the infrastructure lacking to bring interested businesses and artists together. For tourists, this made it so that there was another reason to stop inside these communities, ultimately spending more money within the community (Delconte et al., 2016). The question of the infrastructure is also brought into question. In the study of the communities, it was determined that the LAA’s investigated struggled with gaining an audience with the local authorities, which caused challenges in funding and creating agreements with potential donors such as developers (Delconte et al., 2016). This case study demonstrates that LAAs have abilities to develop unique experiences in the community but must also have the support of the local government in the area.
2.7. Tourism Wayfinding and Placemaking

Wayfinding is a crucial component to a community, and something that municipalities must consider when developing a tourism industry. When considering wayfinding in a tourism sense, local government has an opportunity to address the needs of both tourists and locals; with the creation of this infrastructure providing a public narrative as well as a high quality customer experience (Gibson & Pullman, 2009). In fact, modern wayfinding in urban areas is set in ensuring a positive tourism experience, with travel guides in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century providing directions to destinations, routes as well as ratings for attractions creating a narrative for visitors to various European cities (Gibson & Pullman, 2009). For wayfinding to be successful and mean something, then there must be a community that has goods to be displayed to prospective guests. From this, most tourism-based places see a level of organic placemaking, where the community develops experiences on their own, and a level of top-down, master planned marketing narratives to tie the unique experiences together with branding (Lew & Lew, 2017). This is where wayfinding comes into play; with interpretive and guiding information directing tourists in the way of a storyline as they interact with the tourism product on offer (Lew & Lew, 2017).

When considering tourism and wayfinding, the need to consider a storyline and target user must be considered. For example, a tourist who is entering an area on a long range cycling trip may require wayfinding information and signage that denotes safe travel routes, alternate routes and cyclist-friendly amenities; with perceptions and satisfaction of a region’s cycling storyline being threatened if this wayfinding is not properly accounted for (Lamont & Causley, 2010). Lamont & Causley determined that one of the simplest ways to provide high quality narratives within wayfinding was detailed maps. The study reported that cycle tourists
appreciated these maps because they provided safe routes to cycle, provide planning opportunities to ensure enough supplies are brought with them, as well as providing certainty that they will not get lost in the midst of their travels (Lamont & Causley, 2010). Wayfinding anxiety can be a major influence on visitors to a region, especially if they are visiting for the first time. In a study of first time visitors to Venice, some of the primary factors in creating wayfinding anxiety for those visitors was feelings of anxiety rising if they felt lost, finding their way back to a familiar area if they took a wrong turn, as well as simply finding a destination in an unfamiliar place (Chang, 2013). These feelings then have a cascading effect, with tourists taking a wrong route, missing an appointment or excursion or getting lost in an unfamiliar region or country, leading to a negative impression of that area (Chang, 2013).

When it comes to the most appropriate method of wayfinding, different modes can have different results. An Australian study of wayfinding methods saw GPS maps users, map users and wayfinding signage users navigate a portion of the Brisbane Central Business District. The study determined that while the GPS users were able to get to their destination with more certainty with a route planned out on their phone, those who were using maps and wayfinding signage were much more social, and in the case of the map users had the most positive statements on their experience within the area (Vaez et al., 2019). From this, wayfinding can also assist communities that struggle with large crowds of visitors in order to mitigate the impact to the community when they struggle to find their destinations. In a case in Hawaii, a community installed cycling directional signage in line with those found in the US Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (Keliikoa et al., 2018). With uniform signage being easy to read and understand no matter what language background, nearly 85% of the participants stated this made it easier for tourists to navigate, ultimately improving sentiments
from residents of the area as well (Keliikoa et al., 2018). When considering the Brisbane example, those who navigated via signage may also use more social experiences, including asking for directions as well as following large crowds to the eventual destination (Vaez et al., 2019).

2.8. Carrying Capacity

The concept of carrying capacity has been seen within the tourism development sector in recent years. Generally, this term refers to how much development a region can sustain without having a negative impact on the region itself. In the tourism context, the carrying capacity phenomenon is described as the maximum number of tourists that a destination can handle without an excessive decline in environmental health, decline in visitor satisfaction, or a detrimental impact on the resident’s social wellbeing in that region (Beaver, 2012). Once the capacity has been reached, the destination immediately falls victim to its own success, as the facilities and experiences that made the destination desirable in the first place fall apart under the pressure (Beaver, 2012).

In many destinations which environmental or historical features make up the main attractions, carrying capacity is something which has come up in other parts of the world. In one case in Italy, a group of researchers created a complex formula to determine if a set of beaches on the Tyrrhenian coast were reaching a point of unsustainability. The researchers investigated this line by evaluating perceptions of the beaches via comments from the popular travel review site TripAdvisor. From this study, they determined that between a period in 2014 and 2016, visitor reviews had increasingly taken the stance that the beaches had become
overcrowded which in turn decreased their satisfaction with their visit to the island (Corbau, Benedetto, Congiatu, Simeoni, & Carboni, 2019). This data is important, especially to a tourism board looking to judge the health of their destination. With this being considered, the group made assumptions on the state of the island as to how based on the data they received from not only the TripAdvisor feedback, but with interviews with tourism operators and those who were at the location of the beaches (Corbau, Benedetto, Congiatu, Simeoni, & Carboni, 2019). However, this study seemed to only focus on the impact that high amounts of tourism would have on the experience of other visitors to the beach. While data surrounding the weather and wildlife incursions was used, it was used in the context of determining the effect that it would have on the experience that the visitors would experience as opposed to how the natural sphere would be impacted by tourism visitors (Corbau et al., 2019). While inferences can be drawn from the data collected on the effects that tourism will have on residents, collecting data on the environmental impacts may have simply been outside of the scope of this study.

In the Vancouver Island region, carrying capacity has been evaluated in the context of the Tofino region. Here, a master’s student from UVic conducted a very in-depth study of factors such as accommodation, traffic and crowding of beaches in the community. During the course of the investigation, the researcher discovered a case where residents rejected a higher throughput water connection based on the concern that it would not only negatively impact the environment, but increase the amount of tourism in the community to an unsustainable level (O’Brien, 2007). With this study, the concerns were taken directly to citizens themselves in order to understand how the industry would benefit or impact this group of stakeholders. In the study from Italy, the focus was solely on the tourist experience, even
though the place exists outside of that sector. The study proceeded to compare concerns between tourists and residents alike, in order to determine if there was overlap in concerns. Using this approach, it was made clear that the topic around accommodations for both residents and tourists topped the list of complaints, with residents expressing concerns over rent and availability, much in the same vein as the visitors to the region (O’Brien, 2007). These interviews can be helpful since they then provide patterns and desires that both tourists and residents want to see, creating priorities for municipalities and tourism boards to develop upon.

While a location may not be anywhere near carrying capacity, there is also the chance that senses of place can also act as a factor in carrying capacity. This is often seen in the surf world, with a term called “localism” describing where established surfers begin to resent newcomers to their beach. Informal discussions with surfers on the coast of England described their connection to their beach as similar to the soccer fandoms and communities that the country is known for; with that shared community through surf redefining the meaning of the place (Beaumont & Brown, 2016,). As a result of this, newcomers to the beach are seen as a threat to that created identity, especially as more visitors arrive to the beaches in order to capitalize on the surfing opportunities (Beaumont & Brown, 2016). In the case of the surfing community, this devolved into threats and in some cases violence towards visitors to the beach, caused by those initial surfers feeling pushed out of the space which made up a large part of their identity (Beaumont & Brown, 2016). This case demonstrates that developing space in the name of tourism can have detrimental impacts on those who have made potential tourism space a core portion of their identity.
Considering both local satisfaction and concerns over environmental degradation, tourism agencies and communities alike must look towards Sustainable Tourism to provide a model that will ensure harmony and a tourism industry that can last for many years. As such, the Tourism Industry Association of Canada has developed eight guidelines that a community should follow when developing their industry. They are as follows: (George, Mair, & Reid, 2009).

1. Protect natural and cultural heritage resources.
2. Promote appreciation and enjoyment.
3. Respect and involve host communities.
4. Influence expectations and use.
5. Minimize impacts.
6. Raise awareness.
7. Work together.
8. Contribute globally.

These guidelines were created in order to ensure that tourism does not have a negative implication on a community's physical and social wellbeing. The development of the community’s industry is also influenced by its physical and social capital, especially in a rural context where resources to undertake the development of an industry may not be as present as they are in a city. These are known as human capital, social capital, financial / build capital, and natural capital; all of which allow for a healthy ecosystem, vital economy and social equality (George et al., 2009). Often, the development of tourism will impact one of these areas or may be constrained in an area due to a lack of such capital. As a result, this can then
have an impact of the development of the industry, as well as negative implications on the community that then hosts this industry.

2.9. Tourism Planning

Tourism planning is a major piece of economic development schemes, and often comes to pass as a form of planning for economic resilience in a region. When it comes to planning for tourism, communities must keep in mind the vast spectrum of visitors to a region. These groups can range from visiting family and relatives (VFR), business visitors, to the holiday seeker, who in turn can range from frugal to luxury (Camilleri, 2018). From this, there are a set of four needs that in turn a visitor to a region will be looking to satisfy (Camilleri, 2018, p. 24).

- Physical, which entails the refreshment of body and mind via activities such as shopping and entertainment, sports, romance and fun;
- Cultural, which includes curiosity of other cultures, art appreciation, participation in large events such as the Olympics;
- Personal, which includes the visiting of friends and relatives, as well as spiritual retreats and the personal challenge of travel; and
- Prestige and Status, including conference and business travel, as well as the partaking of hobbies and educational goals.

With these needs in mind, tourism also must consider four main ingredients when trying to cater to visitors to a community. They include transportation, accommodation, ancillary services and sales and distribution (Camilleri, 2018.) It is the goal of the tourism
agency or community to help coordinate the four ingredients within the community itself in order to produce a consumable product.

When developing through this process, tourism planning also must consider the context of which it is being developed, while utilizing theory to develop that policy. Theory around planning can revolve around either managed change or stimulated change, where managed change comes through careful policy analysis and consultation, while stimulated change comes through delegated authority and direct civic action (Reid, 2003). The route that the final tourism product takes will be defined by the result of the route that the planner takes. Reid continues by stating planners may have to backtrack and start their process of planning again, and switch between an end game of managed or stimulated change in order to create a product that fits with the context of the community (Reid, 2003) These statements demonstrate that planning for tourism may require multiple iterations and feedback from stakeholders in the affected region.

There is also the aspect of resources and competing interests. While a community is by nature a very diverse entity, and with many ideas percolating in the community as to what should be developed, it could be very easy for those in the community to become cynical towards the process. Reid (2003) writes that government has left tourism to be developed by the private sector, meaning a level of disorganization develops around the concept due to the lack of an overarching coordinating body. With multiple interests developing their own efforts and plans, there will often be duplication of efforts, which may lead to resentment between actors. By only having a government or private sector focus on tourism, the community will not be an active participant in the process, leading to a detrimental experience in development as well as negative experiences for visitors (Reid, 2003).
When considering tourism development, the frequent experience that communities have is one of top-down planning model from an external actor. Often, a community will see a tourism development agency provide guidelines and criteria based in management sciences and systems theory generating a program for tourism operators to follow; strategies which ultimately reward those who take part and exclude those who do not (Mair & Reid, 2007). Community control and representation is present through this process, but is often handled by a central organization in the community that then uses the tools and mandates from the provincial or regional organization in order to further market the unique circumstances that makes up the region (Mair & Reid, 2007). With a local office coordinating tourism, there is an on the ground representative and body for businesses to go to in order to join a marketing and development plan, ensuring that their organization can capitalize on the work being conducted.

While British Columbia has multiple tourism agencies such as Destination British Columbia and other regionally based actors, the Province itself has attempted to link tourism destinations together. Launched in 2005, the Circle Route program is a destination marketing plan implemented by the government at the time to drive traffic towards lesser known destinations, as well as communities that were looking to develop their tourism industry. This program offered routes to tourists such as Lake Cowichan, with funding to help develop locally based infrastructure to provide a more cohesive experience to the new influx of visitors (“Province spends $700,000 on ‘circle route’ tourism program,” 2005). This project tied together communities with a common theme; with Lake Cowichan’s route offering a maritime route down the Juan De Fuca Highway corridor into the Victoria region, returning to the region at the end of the tour via the Malahat Corridor on Highway #1. The hope of this circle route
program was to kick start a tourism industry within the communities along the routes, providing a common storyline for travellers to follow as well as drive traffic to some of the province’s lesser known destinations (“Province spends $700,000 on ‘circle route’ tourism program,” 2005).

Figure 3 Illustration of the Pacific Marine Circle Route on Southern Vancouver Island.

2.10. Precedent Plans

Within British Columbia, there have been some similar tourism plans developed for municipalities such as Tofino, Gold River and Vancouver. With Vancouver Island having many communities looking to capitalize upon their natural environment, these plans have had their focus on shoring up economic support for their communities. With the development of each tourism plan, comes a different motivation and pace of implementation
for the community based in the context of each individual community. For example, the growth of Tofino’s tourism industry occurred at a steady pace, considering the fact that resource based industries were still active and able to support the economic viability of the community (Whistler Centre, 2014). However, with swaths of the area now protected national parks or environmental preservation areas, the implementation of such plans may be a higher priority in order to address economic downturn stemming from a forced decline in the forestry sector (Whistler Centre, 2014). The plan goes into significant detail, as it not only looks to choreograph the future development of the industry between the already established stakeholders, but at the same time, manage the effects that tourism will have on their community. After careful analysis and consultation, the plan provides fourteen strategic directions (Whistler Centre, 2014), with four examples below:

- A.1: Making progress on a diverse range of attainable housing.
- B.1: Integrate environmental knowledge/education/respect into all of Tofino’s experiences.
- C.1: Develop excellence in customer and visitor experience.
- D.1: Improve local government and community support of local business.

These items have been grouped around physical infrastructure policy, environmental policy, interpersonal and communications/networks. With the plan focussing on pieces of the tourism industry that could not only grow the industry in the region, but adversely affect it as well. With the Tofino Tourism Master Plan, the strategy not only looks to grow the industry, but also insulate it from potential decline and collapse.
More recently, Vancouver Island University’s *Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute* (MABRRRI) partnered with the Village of Gold River on Northern Vancouver Island to complete their own Tourism Strategic Plan. The story of Gold River has some similarities to Tofino; an industry based in forestry which suffered its own decline, culminating in the closure in its pulp mill in 1998 (Village of Gold River, 2018). Here, the major difference is the fact that while Gold River suffered the same situation of the loss of its primary industry, it does not have the same benefit of the National Park Reserve as found in Tofino. The Gold River context statement also offers some unique challenges and goals for the tourism strategy to offer; specifically the fact the communities existence came to be as a company town, and the ensuing loss of the younger population who left to pursue opportunities in cities where there was work (Village of Gold River, 2018). Comparing the two plans, it seems that the Gold River plan was designed for a community who is attempting to reinvent itself in the face of a seemingly impossible situation, while Tofino’s plan is more of a case of growing an already well-established trade. The Gold River plan follows the same structure as the Tofino example, with a SWOC analysis being undertaken and several recommendations being made in order to help develop the industry from the ground up. In the case of the recommendations made by the plan, the team who compiled the report organized them into *Goals* with a subsection of *Objectives* (Village of Gold River, 2018, pp. 66-69.). The goal areas that this plan came up with are as follows:

1. Create a governance structure to develop and promote the tourism industry in Gold River.
2. Create a community brand and marketing materials.
3. Improve and increase the tourism capacity of Gold River.
4. Improve the visitor experience and provide unique tourism products.
These goals are significantly different from the goals that the Tofino Tourism Master Plan set out, demonstrating that tourism development can vary from community to community, based in the primary needs of that area. For Gold River, their planning and development process required more foundational work due to that community’s tourism infancy; while tourism in Tofino is more established and did not need this infrastructure.

The Sooke region has its own plan, albeit a dated and broad one. Upon its creation in 2008, the plan commissioned by *Tourism British Columbia* prioritized the development of all communities along the Highway 14 corridor which runs through Sooke. The objectives of the plan are not in response to any major consideration; instead focusing more on a general idea as to how to increase the flow of tourists to this part of the island (Tourism British Columbia, 2008). This plan seems to be based in the economic needs involved in creating tourism, as opposed to the broad, yet targeted suggestions seen in both the Tofino and Gold River plans. Within the Sooke plan, the question as to who to target the tourism experience is focussed on quite frequently. This takes form early on in the report, with the report focusing on day and overnight trips feeding off of the already established Victoria tourism market (Tourism British Columbia, 2008). The report demonstrates how the region looks to capitalize on this situation, outlining the following main tactics:

- **Tactic #1:** Establish a new, adequately funded tourism organization within an existing structure, with dedicated staff resources and a representative tourism advisory group.
- **Tactic: #9:** Encourage the development of clusters of attractive shops, artisan studios, unique attractions and restaurants in town centres and nearby waterfront areas.
• Tactic #14: Develop a Sooke to Port Renfrew tourism brochure and print ads that reflect the new positioning and brand identity.

• Tactic #22: Create an “invite family and friends” e-mail campaign, encouraging residents to invite their friends and family for a visit.

The tactics that the plan outlines focus on a range of marketing and organizational challenges that were being faced by the region at the time. These tactics that were proposed did not seem to be related to any challenge unique to the region, instead focusing on a general marketing framework that could easily be applied to any other community in the province.

Recently, the Cowichan Lake region completed a very focussed tourism development study, with the goals of driving further tourism traffic via cycling and hiking. The plan, titled the *Hiking & Cycling Tourism Action Plan: Cowichan Lake Region* was developed in 2018 through a partnership between the CVRD, Community Futures Cowichan, The Town of Lake Cowichan and the Lake Cowichan First Nation. Here, the group worked to create an action plan to develop tourism in the region, by focusing on a study of the region’s tourism assets, best practices of tourism development, potential infrastructure developments and ending with the completion of an action plan to act upon these goals (Tourism Vancouver Island, 2018). The primary goal of the plan was to identify opportunities solely around trails, cycle touring and mountain biking that could be further developed around the region, to provide another activity in the region that could potentially be undertaken year-round.
2.11. The Planner’s Role in Tourism

It is natural that planners have a role in the development of a tourism industry, especially when making decisions around infrastructure and land use. However, sentiment in planning towards tourism has often taken a more adversarial stance. Municipal planners have often taken the stance that tourism development comes in direct conflict with the environment, while planners who solely focus on tourism see the community being separate from the development of tourism (Shortt, 1994). Naturally, these two stances are at odds with each other, and discount the community’s social response towards tourism. It is for this reason that tourism planning must be conducted at a local level and involve affected community members. A community in Australia which was experiencing over tourism wanted to address this issue looked to create a new model of tourism development in which priority was given to mitigation of negative impacts of tourism, as well as inclusion of the residents who lived there. (Moscardo & Murphy, 2014). To this end, communities look towards engagement with their citizens to determine the best ways to develop tourism at a local level. In one case in Vermont, county planners used a participatory approach to planning for tourism in the community, with an end result of a clearer understanding of the communities needs surrounding tourism and recreation in the community, as well as opportunities for tourism development that had not been previously considered by the planning team (Chase et al., 2010). The role of the planner is to bring diverse backgrounds within a localized context together in order to develop a strategy that is contextual to the community it is being implemented in. Often, previous tourism development schemes have taken a top down implementation approach, with limited room for local context or input (George et al., 2009). With such an approach and implementation strategy, resentment towards the industry and
planning of the industry in the community could exist, especially when a plan may be one which can be used in any community within the same province (George et al., 2009).

Planners can make land use decisions that impact where tourism develops, and how it interfaces with existing industry. This can become contentious, especially if undertaken in a region with multiple active industries competing. During the 1990s, the Caribou-Chilcotin region of British Columbia undertook the process of developing a tourism industry in the region, in response to desires to further diversify their industries. However, this process came into conflict with agricultural, forestry and mining operations who pushed back against tourism operators who wanted to see profitable resource lands placed into a proposed protected area (Williams et al., 1998). Ultimately, this deadlock was broken after much negotiation; with protected resource areas and conservation areas being established by the province under a regional land use scheme (Williams et al., 1998). While communities often look to tourism to revitalize their community after the collapse of a staple industry, development of tourism alongside existing resource extraction industries can provide challenges for planners. Developing tourism also forces tourism planners to balance the needs of infrastructure for tourism and the natural environment that makes up the tourism industry. In Costa Rica, planners have to balance the demands for urban infrastructure which can cause urbanization, alongside the natural beauty of the country which makes up the bulk of their tourism industry (Irazábal, 2018.) This balance is crucial, as a lack of co-ordination can be detrimental to that natural environment. Using the Costa Rica example, a lack of coherent planning schematics in the region made further beachfront development chaotic, leading to negative impacts towards the environment as existing sewage and water connections get overloaded by this haphazard approach (Irazábal, 2018). By not appropriately managing the development of the
developments related to tourism in some of the areas within the area, a lack of planning for ensuing tourism developments can threaten an industry completely.

One of the more impactful areas that planners can leave their mark on tourism development is through wayfinding. An example from Victoria’s development of tourism in the late 1970s saw planners work to push a crowd mainly made up of day trip focussed tourists to specific nodes within the old town; areas which had high cultural value and commerce activity (Murphy, 1980). From this, planners focussed on the development of pedestrian routes to further guide these visitors to these highlights and maximise the visitors short time to the community by encouraging traffic to these areas with urban design (Murphy, 1980). From this perspective, the planners involved in the exercise had a practical hand in marketing the destinations in the downtown core towards this day trip demographic by creating pedestrian routes to these areas within the downtown core. Another area that planners can have the most impact on day to day operations is through public participation in the planning process. By utilizing a pro-active method to planning for tourism, misunderstandings and uncertainties about planning development can be alleviated before they become major issues in the community (Simmons, 1994). Furthermore, consultation with the local community can be very crucial to gaining buy-in from the community. In the case of planning for heritage tourism, working with the community on such proposals can work towards compromises that serve heritage and communal goals, all the while navigating issues which can become contentious within the community as a result of attachment to heritage attractions (Dragouni et al., 2018). From the community standpoint, planning opportunities allow for the community to voice anxieties, but also need to balance the needs of business that do make up the industry. This delicate balance was demonstrated in Sitka, Alaska, where a tourism plan
proposing a new cruise ship dock was defeated by the local elected officials due to business owners who felt pushed out due to community concerns overriding the process (Jordan, 2015). As a result, a second tourism plan was commissioned that ultimately ruled against this development, with cruise ship visits declining as a result of the lack of facilities and further tourism development being a priority item (Jordan, 2015). This scenario demonstrated how planning must find a balance of all needs of the community, but also understanding that decisions can also have detrimental impacts on a community’s priorities and tourism goals.

2.12. Analysis

Economic resiliency is a concept that has only gained traction in the mindsets of planners and their communities over the past twenty years. While economic development departments work to avoid economic calamity today, the assumption made in many different resource-based communities was that their mill or cannery would be the backbone of the town’s economy permanently. The literature reviewed suggests that this phenomenon is often seen in smaller communities, with larger cities having the foresight and ability to prepare for the future. Of course, there is no denying the role that geography plays in the ability for a community to be economically resilient, with Harold Innis remarking on the need for communities needing to understand both human and physical geography in order to be economically resilient (Hayter & Barnes, 1990). A community must always be mindful of its human situation, such as economic wellbeing, as well as what is physically there in order to understand the economic forces that allow their community to exist. The questions that will be asked will reside around what natural features a community can exploit to entice and enhance tourist visits, and if there is the human capital in the region to action upon it. For a
rural community, this is all encompassing; with the presence of economic, natural, human, social and cultural elements being deciding factors in the creation of the tourism industry (Hall et al., 2003). While communities may immediately divert to building a tourism industry in response to economic challenges, it simply may not be viable due to a lack of relatively close natural features or created experiences; as the availability of such opportunities greatly impacts the success of a tourism industry (Kreag, 2001). There is also the question of accessibility, and if the infrastructure in the region can provide easy access to visitors from around the world. This being said, tourists who are able to make the journey are more likely to appreciate projects developed for tourism more, especially if such rural opportunities are in areas with untouched wilderness (Riddle & Thompson-Fawcett, 2019). If a community has leadership and a buy in from its citizens, then it is possible that a seemingly unlikely experience could be made into an attraction built upon invested human capital. Previously, it may have been that due to the capital being tied up in the main staple industry of a community, any sort of development of a newer replacement industry was superseded by the seemingly endless possibilities brought on by that main staple industry; with diversification only coming after the existing industry enters a crisis (Barnes et al., 2001). As communities have seen the challenges faced by their peers as a result of the collapse of an industry, it has become more of a priority of communities big and small to evaluate their economies and diversify them in a way that prepares them for any potential future economic collapse.

When it comes to developing the tourism industry, there is often reluctance to allow change in a community when working with stakeholders, especially when developing in the wake of a closing industry. In an example in Central Canada, general involvement in community groups and groups that could boost opportunities such as tourism declined in the
aftermath of the closure of their pulp mill (Oncescu, 2015). This goes against what other cases in the literature stated, in which community members banded together to take a less than ideal situation in their community and develop it in the name of tourism. In the case of that pulp mill community, the reasoning for that slump was also related to the fact that many families had to take on jobs outside of the community or care for family in the absence of a family member, further detracting time away from potential economic development activities (Oncescu, 2015). These situations will make transition difficult, with the human capital needed to develop groups for tourism focusing on more pressing personal concerns.

At the same time, communities can build upon opportunities which then connect to other opportunities in other parts of a region or province. Often, a community can become reluctant to work with other like-minded stakeholders due to the fear of competition or historical distrust between government stakeholders. The literature reviewed emphasises co-operation, which naturally requires trust. It comes as no surprise that in tourism development frameworks, open dialogue, broad consensus and a fair representation of views is prioritized in order to build trust from diverse groups of stakeholders (Maiden, 2008). By having open discussions, it can strengthen the tourism capacity within the community to further development and begin to break down silos that may have been created previously. To that end, the literature continues to describe decision making in tourism as being interjurisdictional, requiring that these jurisdictions make joint decisions together (Maiden, 2008).

To an extent, inter-regional branding has been implemented at a senior government level, with the British Columbia Government implementing circle route tours to drive traffic to locations that may not be along major highways, such as Lake Cowichan. There is no denying
the positive impact that this has had to Lake Cowichan, with at least 4,000 visitor contacts at the Lake Cowichan Visitor Centre resulting from increased highway traffic (Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre, 2018). This demonstrates how a regionally advertised route can draw tourism to a community, in the hopes that they may stay and explore the communities. However, this statistic does not provide how many of those visitors ended up spending more time in the community than they had anticipated. This can be one of the challenges of such a scheme, with traffic through the community not translating into visits and revenue for the town. Instead, this could even lead to a detrimental impact on the community, with higher through traffic potentially taxing the community’s infrastructure. How these further developments are received may depend on the amount of time residents have resided in the region. In a study in Montana, researchers found that those who had been in the community shorter periods of time seemed to be more open to the idea of further tourism development, while those who had been settled in Montana for the longer periods of time were less likely to pursue tourism development (McCool & Martin, 1994).

In the age of smart phones and internet access, an individual’s own ability to research and develop an itinerary can prove to mitigate attempts by planners to guide visitors along pre-determined itineraries. While visitors to the community who are passing through could visit and choose routes as they are planned on the ground, the use of technology such as navigation apps and trip planning websites may negate any meaningful guidance created by local authorities. In 2015, the American Travel Survey determined that American travellers were increasingly turning to internet based booking services and resources to plan their journeys, with internet resources offering deals on travel and providing guidance as to what attractions to visit and what to avoid (Xiang et al., 2015). This may make it harder for a formal
curation process to occur when planning the community’s tourism industry and may require planners to consider the implications of tourism on their communities. One study of social media and over tourism discovered that social media accentuates concerns about over tourism in communities, providing a frustration for policy makers now needing to respond to outrage from residents concerned about the effects (Koens et al., 2018). Furthermore, many of the articles reviewed do not take into account the rise of platforms such as Airbnb, which allows homeowners to ‘share’ accommodations ranging from a room in a house to an entire house or apartment all from a simple smartphone app (Camilleri, 2018). While similar to a traditional bed and breakfast, its ad hoc nature may mean it does not contribute to existing tourism marketing or development schemes present in the community. Furthermore, there may be challenges when operations are faced with a community’s land use regulations. In some cases, the state of such app-based accommodations have been contrary to a communities basic health and safety requirements, as well as not collecting the general destination marketing tax that traditional hotels often pay on every booking (Guttentag, 2015). These online accommodations can represent both an opportunity and a challenge from a planning perspective; with local officials now needing to respond with the development of policy to regulate such developments, while balancing both the values of short-term rental users and local residents who may have dramatically different opinions on the topic (Saarinen et al., 2017). As this sector grows in prominence, local authorities and visitor centres will need to work with short term rental operators to ensure that they manage their operations in a way that does not negatively affect their surrounding community. This may prove to be a new area of regulation and potential partnership when developing a community’s tourism infrastructure.
Chapter 3.
Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The aim of the research was two fold – first to discover some general themes and challenges that planners have when considering tourism in smaller, resource based economies, and secondly to produce a document which provides officials and organizations within the Cowichan Lake Region specifically tailored recommendations regarding the state of their tourism industry.

The research program for this major project utilized a mixed methods approach, in order to provide a comprehensive set of data in order to make recommendations for the Cowichan Lake Region. However, there was more of a focus on qualitative data in order to gain opinions leading to understanding the community’s personal perceptions. This is important considering that perceptions of tourism from residents and decision-makers will naturally have an impact on the success and further development of the industry (Stylidis et al., 2014, p. 43). With the research program I conducted, I attempted to gain the perceptions of the average citizen, as well as decision makers and tourism officials who may have expertise in these fields.

Qualitative data was collected via face to face interviews with members of the Lake Cowichan regional community. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured approach, in order to encourage more accurate and honest responses to the questions, as well as to ensure comparable datasets. By approaching the interviews in such a manner, I gained
insights into perceptions of tourism that I did not expect. One example of this was how participants spoke to economic development that would not result from tourists taking advantage of tourism opportunities, but instead seeing how the area would be suitable for a business in the future. Further discussion on this finding can be found in Chapter 4.1. Please refer to Appendix D to see an example of the interview questionnaire.

Quantitative data was also collected as part of the research program. This included population statistics from Statistics Canada, and visitor statistics provided to me by the Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre. General population data was used to scope the population of the region and was taken from the 2016 census. The data provided by the Visitor Centre covers visitor contacts at the centre from 2009 to 2019 and required a visitor to come to the centre to count as a contact. Therefore, it does not include every visitor that came to the region during that timeframe. Furthermore, quantitative data was collected through an affinity exercise as part of the two public outreach sessions.

I undertook the creation of the recommendations booklet using a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints (SWOC) approach. I interpreted the results from the interviews utilizing this approach, with responses from data collection being filed into the SWOC categories. Observational data was also collected using this same approach. This method was frequently used in the Gold River Tourism Plan when collecting and interpreting data to decide on what recommendations to include in the document.
3.2. Collection Methods

Interviews were conducted face to face in the Lake Cowichan region, with all participants being interviewed in person. These interviews were semi-structured, with questions designed to encourage conversation and exploration of ideas that participants may have around the topic of tourism. These interviews were recorded upon reception of consent, with a transcript provided after two weeks to provide clarification and approve the transcript. Ultimately, seven of the twelve initially invited participants chose to be interviewed for the project, with two more individuals being interviewed after being referred by those originally chosen. While I did not request for more leads for interviewees, participants seemed enthusiastic at the idea of me speaking to others who had further perspective and knowledge on tourism in the region. Notably, a few participants requested that they be interviewed with a colleague in the same room, who provided a panel style format of an interview. While I offered to schedule a private one-on-one interview with each interviewee, this offer was declined. In these cases, both participants were from the same organization, but from different departments and conducted different duties, providing different perspectives. The interviews took place over the course of four months, from July to October 2019.

Two public outreach sessions were hosted in the Town of Lake Cowichan, enabling the collection of data from the general public. Members of the public were invited to answer questions regarding their perception of tourism in the community, as well as provide commentary on areas of the community that could be capitalized upon to develop the industry in the region. Appendix E contains examples of the outreach boards used in the process. Members of the public who did take part in this opportunity found it a beneficial experience,
with many remarking they had never really considered the role of tourism or what impacts it had on the community,

Figure 4 Outreach event in Lake Cowichan, September 2019.

Some observational data was also collected during multiple visits to the region. This process involved me imaging myself as a tourist in the community, by visiting local attractions, businesses and areas that a tourist may want to experience while in the region. This allowed me to understand the facilities and opportunities which exist for tourists in the community, noting any challenges or frustrations relevant to the process.

Another collection method that could have been considered for the main project was the administration of a survey that could be filled out by residents to understand their
perceptions of tourism within the community. This may have been a way to get around the limitations of finances, especially if the survey was administered in partnership with an organization in the community. During the defence of this project, the Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Centre felt that such a survey would assist them and their continued development of their tourism sector. To help facilitate this, I created a survey that the visitors centre could administer to gauge perceptions of tourism within their community in the same vein as the outreach posters. This survey will be administered separately from this project by the Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce and will build upon the major project. The survey has two variants: one for residents of the region and another for visitors to the area. Please see Appendix F for the surveys.

3.3. Population Selection

Interview participants were selected because of their connections to the region, or their experience in the tourism industry. Most of the participants had a government background, ranging from elected officials to local government staff. Two participants were from non-profit sector organizations in the community, with another participant being from a provincial destination marketing organization. Most participants resided and worked in the Lake Cowichan Region. Recruitment occurred over email as well as telephone (see Appendix B for email example). Though not requested, many participants provided names and contact information for other interested parties in the region.

By conducting the public outreach sessions, opinions could be sought from the general public. Public outreach was open to any interested parties, with the sole caveat that
participants be over the age of 18 in order to participate. This type of data collection was important, because it allowed for insight from citizens who might not otherwise have the opportunity to comment on tourism in the community. It also provided an opportunity to consider the spaces and features that locals prize within the community that could be further developed for tourism within the region. The first session was held on a Saturday during May 2019 at the Country Grocer Store in Lake Cowichan. This session was well attended, with about twenty respondents providing input on a rather wet day. This session was co-located with the Lake Cowichan Food Bank Society, who generously offered a table at their own outreach event to help with the process. A second event was held on a Saturday of September 2019 but did not result in the same level of engagement. This event was held at the Cowichan Lake Recreation Centre and resulted in only a handful of participants.

3.4 Regrets and Limitations

While many in the Lake Cowichan region were enthusiastic in participating in the project, some larger organizations and destinations were not engaged with, due to lack of time or interest. A few notables include the management of the Laketown Ranch and Tourism Cowichan. I was also unable to get in contact with the Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation, which is unfortunate as this was one of the main stakeholders I wanted to interview. I also wished to speak with Ditidaht Nation as well; however I did not have the ability to access their community due to the lack of an appropriate vehicle.

Interest from the general public may have played a role in the limited responses from one of the public outreach events, as I did not have the resources to advertise the events.
There was no money for advertising for any of the public outreach events, potentially leading to an underwhelming amount of responses. There was also no opportunity due to time and logistics to host a public outreach event in the outlying communities of Honeymoon Bay and Youbou. While the Town of Lake Cowichan acts as a hub for the region, being able to host an event in these communities may have resulted in a different take on tourism development from those communities. It is for this reason after the defence I elected to create a survey for the Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce to continue the work of the project and gauge perceptions of the greater region.

Building upon this, more engagement with stakeholders from Honeymoon Bay and Youbou would have provided for more localized data from these communities, providing another perspective. For the most part, interviewees lived and worked in the Town of Lake Cowichan, with one interviewee living in Honeymoon Bay and another in Nanaimo.
Chapter 4: Results and Findings

This section of the major project was written with the intent to provide a focus on “what planners need to know” when considering tourism development in smaller, resource dependent communities. The findings here are topics which will be present in many different small communities on Vancouver Island and British Columbia. As part of the project, a smaller, thirty-page document was created for stakeholders in the Lake Cowichan region to refer to when developing their tourism industry further, based on feedback from the project. This document is specifically tailored to the region itself and can be found in Appendix A.

The following section will describe the themes that came up in the interviews, supported by the data collected at the public outreach sessions, as well as the general observational data collected during the process. The findings that were made throughout the process are reinforced by the literature review, with many of the concepts discovered during that portion of the research being present in the interviews.

4.1 Importance of Tourism in the Lake Cowichan Region

Overall, participants agreed that tourism played a major role in the community’s economic health and well being, with all participants hoping for increased tourism in the community. Some interviewees remarked that for many years, tourism in the region had often been overlooked by officials and residents alike, in favour of the forestry industry which had long acted as the main driver. To this end however, one participant lamented that while
tourism provided jobs for the community, they did not provide the same level of wages that the previous forestry industry operations did. Other participants also expressed concern at the economic benefits offered by tourism related work, with the rise of service industry jobs not providing a sustainable wage for their employees.

Interestingly, many participants stated that while tourism is great for the community as a short term goal, it serves a higher purpose in attracting more people to the with some becoming residents as opposed to transient visitors who may only typically come by for a weekend. As one participant responded:

“There's an important aspect to this around retirement, as Lake Cowichan is a retirement community. There are linkages between those people that come and explore as tourists who may also end up as residents one day. “

This was a sentiment shared by at least six participants that were interviewed. Respondents mentioned that due to Lake Cowichan’s proximity to communities such as Victoria, Nanaimo and Duncan, there may be interest from those who come to Lake Cowichan as tourists to purchase a property due to its lower cost of living when compared to the aforementioned destinations.

Other observations on the industry in the community brought up the idea of arts, culture and activities. Participants noted that as a result of the tourism industry in the community, festivals, shops and services would be both more sustainable and viable long term. While the Lake Cowichan region does have attractions such as markets, restaurants and shops, the limited ones that do exist may be at the capacity
the current community can economically handle. Further development to the tourism industry would provide an economic base for these businesses to sustain themselves.

Figure 5 Visualization on response that tourism attracts permanent residents amongst participants.

One respondent also noted that while logging had decreased over the last number of years, it is still a very active industry within the region. Four respondents noted that tourism may be the gateway to attracting people to the region for industries that either may not have the same impact that forestry does. One participant observed:

“Growing a tourism economy in a community like Lake Cowichan for example, is a powerful way to kind of transform the community, make it a more livable place, attract residents, retain existing residents. This comes the opportunity to attract telecommuters or tele-computer staff attract tech businesses, which year over year will
lead to the rebirth of Lake Cowichan as a community that is a great place to live and work."

Once more, tourism acts as a marketing tool that encourages people to move to the community if they had a truly exceptional experience. It is these types of amenities that people look to when they come to Lake Cowichan, especially those who are looking to live in the community later. On one of the outreach boards, one respondent noted that the reason that they had moved to the region was due to its many opportunities for active and outdoor recreation. By tailoring their tourism market to this demographic, Lake Cowichan and other areas could also provide benefits to not only visitors, but to residents as well.

**4.2 Community Stakeholder Networking**

Being part of the greater CVRD, the Lake Cowichan region closely works with *Cowichan Tourism*. This is a non-profit destination marketing organization (DMO) who takes in annual grant monies from organizations such as the CVRD and other communities and funders. The Town of Lake Cowichan itself has an agreement with the Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce to operate the local visitor centre in the community. Overall, most interviewees deferred to these organizations when it came to the development of tourism in the region, with most participants pointing towards such organizations when it came to questions about personal experience in economic development.

Two respondents spoke to their experience working with such organizations. One respondent praised this model, by saying:
“It wasn't necessarily our idea, because one of the beauties of this model is that it's member and stakeholder driven. For the Municipal Regional District (MRDT) tax to receive buy in from hoteliers and bed and breakfasts in the area, it would likely have been difficult for them to agree to a tax in which the local government administered. As a separate stakeholder group, Tourism Cowichan then administers the MRDT.”

Another respondent spoke to the importance of having a stakeholder driven organization, highlighting an experience that occurred during the creation of a Mobile Visitor Center:

“It was a project putting that together and managing that and making sure that that was funded and supported by our governing bodies and stakeholders. Those stakeholders for that project are the town, electoral area F and area I, the Chamber of Commerce, and the people of our community, making sure that it's going to be self reliant.”

These experiences demonstrate the importance of working with multiple stakeholders. Due to the size of the Town of Lake Cowichan, it may be challenging for the municipality to fully fund projects related to tourism development and visitor support alongside their traditional municipal operations. By avoiding a siloing effect and working with nearby governmental organizations such as the regional district, the community could tap into those greater resources and find a way to potentially encourage more tourist visits to the region. MRDT funding provides communities that may not necessarily have the same hotel base to tap into funding to further develop their industry in concert with the rest of the region.
Interviewees also expressed the desire to work closer with some of the region’s major attractions. All respondents mentioned the impact of the Laketown Ranch, a large property north of the community known for hosting large music festivals in the summer such as Laketown Shakedown and Sunfest. Two commenters noted that this organization was one that should be further worked with, especially considering that many attendees utilize the town’s amenities. One commentator noted the impact of this facility, remarking that:

“Laketown Ranch is different than so much of the rest of the festival world because a lot of festivals take place in a farmer's field, an abandoned airport. This is a purpose-built facility. And when you consider the population of the Cowichan Lake area is give or take 6000 folks, you could have 15,000 people in that facility in any given day when they're having a festival. So that kind of impact is going to be profound. And we've already begun to see some of those things.”

With such a large population attending these festivals, there is a significant impact to the community’s economic wellbeing. Of course, large events do cause challenges and consternation to the community. While some of these tangible challenges will be discussed in another section, stakeholders identified experiences of working with the festival grounds as a major strength. One participant expressed optimism for working with the festival society, stating:

“But he (the owner) loves this community and has big plans. I think that it's a matter of pulling all those communities and partners together for a joint Lake Cowichan experience.”
Another destination mentioned by three interviewers was the proximity of the Vancouver Island Motorsports Circuit. This circuit is located 21 kilometers east of the town outside of Duncan. This track attracts car enthusiasts and large organizations to the region for automobile related events. These events take place at the track, or on the surrounding highways. One interviewee recalled one such event:

“They (VIMC) brought in 300 BMW salesman, and they had shipped in their new models for this year. They said that what they did was they brought all these guys out from Toronto, and then drove all the way to Genoa Bay. All those guys from Toronto saw what we had in this valley, and I’m sure some of them came up to Lake Cowichan. That's part of your tourism, is bringing people here that will come back to camp or stay overnight another time.”

While the track is outside of the study area, there is no denying the opportunities that further development of this facilities would have for the Lake Cowichan region. This would be an excellent example of the opportunities for working regionally, despite the attraction not necessarily being within the specific Lake Cowichan region.

Within the Lake Cowichan region itself, there are also desires to work within the community in order to grow the tourism industry, and some of this work is well underway. Two interviewees referenced a local group called LIFT whose acronym is comprised of the following initials of the following stakeholders; the local Chamber of Commerce, Town of Lake Cowichan, CVRD Electoral Areas I and F and Ts’uubzasatx First Nation. This group focusses on economic development specific to the Lake Cowichan region as opposed to the greater Cowichan Region. While the interviewees
did not go into detail on the work of the group, the CVRD Economic Development website describes the group as an Indigenous led organization looking to lay frameworks for further trail, residential and commercial development within the region (*LIFT Committee Rises Up in Cowichan Lake Region*, 2019).

This is a positive development in the region, as it seems to not only encompass the tourism aspect, but other businesses as well. This would fit well with previous respondent’s desires to use tourism in order to attract more people and businesses to the region. By having such a committee, development of the tourism industry could then occur in a way that encourages these tourists to set up business after their visit.

When considering the role of community groups in tourism development, development has not come without challenges. One respondent noted that in previous years, tourism staff were reluctant to take part in tourism development operations in tandem with organizations elsewhere in the Cowichan Valley. One participant observed:

“Our chamber and the Duncan chamber do not really mesh, because they each can feel like they can handle it. I mean they’d like to help, but this chamber likes to be independent. It would be nice if they work together and help each other out.”

The respondent also added:

“There may be a little bit of a disconnect, but maybe less so now since we’ve had a change of personnel.”
This situation demonstrates an example of the siloing found in rural tourism discussed in the literature review, which as been resolved. With the rejection of help or a lack of desire to seek help from the greater region, it may limit the ability for a community to efficiently market its destination and find support to further entice people to visit the region. On the other hand, another respondent remarked on the visitor’s centre assistance to other visitor centres in the region:

“They (Lake Cowichan Visitor Centre) went to the Chemainus Chamber of Commerce Visitor Center and helped them with their Movie Night. They helped them with promoting the event, as well as helping run the equipment. Chemainus had an incident that happened where they required help, and the Visitor Centre were the only ones at that time that could help. When they sought out help, Lake Cowichan was more than willing to come and help, even though it took up staff and volunteer time. They were willing to make sure that their events thrived, because the Lake Cowichan Visitor Centre knew they could be the ones on that ask list.”

This favour that the CLVC undertook for their fellow visitor centre in the Cowichan Valley demonstrates the ability for smaller scale networks to be created throughout visitor centres in the wider region. It demonstrates that community members are able to look past their own localized context in order to further grow their own visitor centre’s connections to provide for a better experience. From this, the centre does have a vehicle called the “Mobile Visitor Centre Unit,” a trailer which is able to be moved around the region to be able to provide information to visitors at events such as at Laketown Ranch. This trail was created in collaboration with the Town of Lake Cowichan and Cowichan Valley Regional District and has been a
significant success bringing information to tourists in the region. The development of the MVCU is one which occurred in the last few years, meaning that previous siloing may no longer be as big of an issue as before.

Finally, an issue that three respondents stated was a challenge when working with stakeholders was funding and costs. Being a smaller community, financial resources may be tied up on other projects, or in the case of businesses, already running on limited margins. This can make developing buy in challenging within stakeholders. It can also lead to a less than optimal experience for visitors to the community, especially when considering the creation of marketing materials such as maps and brochures. One respondent remarked their own challenges with gaining buying in from other organizations in the community:

“ If there’s a map that you need to develop, if there’s a brochure that you need to put out, you’re looking at a $350 buy in to promote your business in this map, and then in this brochure, and then in this booklet, by the time that it’s all said and done, you’re looking at a small business that that has to put out $1200 to $2,000 in order for them to be promoted. That is where I find it can be the hardest. There are times that when it’s a free offering, then they question, if you’re giving something away free, then it really has no value.”

From this, having the already small business core provide further financial support that may already be thin for financial resources may prove to be a challenge. On the other hand, creating a free map according to this respondent brings its own challenges of perceptions to the greater business community. When it comes to
marketing materials that come at no cost to the business, one may question where the funding for such projects is coming from. Perhaps if funding for maps or brochures is coming from a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) or an organization such as the Regional District or Town, then it may be better received. Having a lack of funds will prove to be a challenge throughout the rest of the analysis.

4.3 Opportunities for Tourism Development

When it comes to development of tourism in Lake Cowichan, all participants pointed towards capitalizing on the attractions that made their community unique. One of the primary opportunities that respondents identified as an opportunity was the development of trails throughout the community, with four respondents identifying trails as an area for development. This comes on the heels of recent developments in the Cowichan Lake Area for the further development of trails within the community. In 2018, stakeholders came together in the area to form a trails-based tourism action plan in order to further develop the area’s hiking and cycling trails. As it stands, Lake Cowichan has a few hiking trails, and is connected to the Trans Canada Trail. By further developing the plan, the community has the opportunity to develop its existing assets further.

While hiking and cycling trails are common throughout Vancouver Island, one opportunity that two participants mentioned when it came to this development was for ATVs in the community. These motorized vehicles are prohibited from trails such as the Trans Canada Trail. One respondent noted the lack of trails for these types of vehicles by saying:
“But there's a bit of a weakness in that in that it's those trails are they prohibit motorized vehicles, there's a significant and growing ATV population and culture that can't find those opportunities to recreate in our area at this time.”

Another respondent echoed these sentiments, by saying:

“I mentioned that you must have trails for everybody. You have to have trails for walkers, because obviously walkers don't want to be on a trail with a mountain biker, trails for bikers and trails for ATV people. ATV riders are sanctioned, they're all insured and everything else. It's not like guys that just riding off the bat trying to ruin the thing and throwing beer cans down. Then there's the equestrians, they get along with us (ATV riders) quite well, they let us use their staging areas for some of our things that we do with quads. There are opportunities there for all that in the mountains up here.”

Considering Lake Cowichan’s very active forestry industry, ATV use may be a compatible opportunity for development moving forward. While many logging communities may see use of these trails informally, opportunity may exist for the Lake Cowichan area to consider working with forest companies such as Island Timberlands and TimberWest to develop a unique attraction. Timber companies do pose a threat to the development of tourism in the region, and I evaluate this in section 4.5. Based on a internet analysis of sanctioned ATV or Off-Road Vehicle areas on Vancouver Island, two sites appear to exist; one in the Alberni Valley and one along the Highway 14 corridor between Sooke and Port Renfrew. Providing unique trails in the Cowichan Lake area could be a draw to ATV utilizing tourists in the Duncan and greater mid-island area.
Of course, respondents identified the further development of opportunities in Cowichan Lake itself. Four of the respondents recognized lake access as a opportunity for development. There are multiple sanctioned public lake access points in the area of study, with three being a floating boardwalk style development. In the townsite itself, one dock exists in Saywell Park. Another floating boardwalk owned by the Town is located off South Shore Road at the Cowichan Lake Education Centre. Finally, a third boardwalk is located at the CVRD operated Arbutus Park in Youbou. Through my own observational experiences, I was able to find four other beach accesses: one on the North Side of the Catalyst Weir, one at the Cowichan Lake Education Centre, one in Honeymoon Bay and another one at Gordon Bay Provincial Park.
Figure 6 Map of public water accesses in the region discovered by researcher.

Some outreach data supports further development of waterfront access supported by the public, with four stars out of the sixteen placed at the May event focussing on areas where participants perceived would be a good place to further access the lake. One star was placed in the vicinity of the floating boardwalk at the CLEC, and another close to the dock in downtown Lake Cowichan. The other two areas were in a residential neighbourhood in Youbou and another area between Youbou and Lake Cowichan.

When it comes to developing access to natural features such as lakes further, it may be prudent to develop the existing accesses first and ensure that signage and other wayfinding amenities to get to such opportunities is clearly demarcated. As one participant noted:
“One of the strengths is our lake, just one of the drawbacks to that is that a lot of people complain about access to the lake. So you’ve got a beautiful lake, but there is very limited access. “

Figure 7 Floating Boardwalk in Arbutus Park, Youbou.

While accesses to the lake exist, they are located a fair distance away from the townsite, with limited to no public transit access, and often not walkable from core locations. Furthermore, water accesses are rocky and pebbly which may be problematic for those who may be looking for a sandy beach experience. While the boardwalk structures are great ways to get people out onto the water, their placement
can negate their value from a tourism standpoint by being in areas that are further away from main nodes, such as the Lake Cowichan Townsite or Laketown Ranch.

From observational data taken upon multiple visits to the region, the signage towards such amenities was quite lacking, with consultation with visitor centre staff, I was able to easily find the Arbutus Park Boardwalk, however other beach accesses were more challenging to find. To this extent, there has been some push to improve signage in the area in order to provide visitors easier wayfinding to local attractions:

![Figure 8 Example of directional signage created by the community in Youbou.](image)

Some communities in the area have attempted to rectify the lack of signage in the area by creating their own homemade directional signage to direct citizens to services and
beach accesses, as illustrated in the figure above. There are also many examples of tourist kiosks throughout the region which provide information to travellers in the area, albeit some of these are outdated, as illustrated by this example in Mesachie Lake:

Figure 9 Tourist info kiosk in Mesachie Lake.

While these kiosks are helpful in denoting where trail heads and services are in this part of the region, it was noted that they were out of date as some businesses mentioned on the kiosk had gone out of business in recent years. Furthermore, the kiosks were in inconspicuous locations on the side of the road, meaning someone driving past may miss this opportunity to understand where attractions, accesses and nodes are.

Access to a community also plays a major role in the development of its tourism industry. Lake Cowichan is at the end of BC Highway #18, with South Shore
Road connecting Honeymoon Bay and Mesachie Lake to the highway network, and North Shore Road connecting Youbou and points along the north shore of the lake to the highway network. North Shore and South Shore roads do continue along to private and public forestry roads, with South Shore Road connecting to an abandoned community at the end of the lake called Caycuse, as well as the Ditidaht First Nation’s reserve at Nitinat Lake. In 2009, the province received ownership of the Pacific Marine Road, which was an underutilized logging road connecting South Shore Road to Port Renfrew and BC Highway #14. Two respondents mentioned this road, and the impact that it had on the community. One respondent observed the following about the development on the road:

“The senior government investment in the transportation opportunities to the area, is good for the community for such things as ambulance service and the like. But nothing spurs growth, and nothing improves tourism opportunities than improved transportation and access. That's a big deal that I think is going to drive a lot of economic growth.”

For Cowichan Lake, this connection proved to have a tangible effect on the tourism industry in the community. For example, total visits to the Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre in 2009 was 3,172. A year later saw a 1000 person boost to the centre, with 4,172 visitors visiting the centre (Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre, 2010). While this route had existed in the past, it was a loose and rough gravel logging road, meaning off road capable vehicles would have been the most common vehicles utilizing on this road.
Considering some of the other logging roads in the community, opportunity exists to further improve connections to communities beyond the Lake Cowichan region, such as Nitinat Lake. As well, other roads exist to connect other points of the island, albeit in the same unmaintained resource road fashion. One of these connections includes a route on North Shore road to another logging road near Nanaimo, and a direct connection to Bamfield and Port Alberni. Two participants commented on these opportunities serving as further opportunity to encourage tourism to the Cowichan region itself. One participant responded:

“Soon, there’s going to be more paving, happening on roads to Bamfield and Nitinat. They’re looking at huge dollars…

…. Indigenous peoples, as well as in Port Alberni and Banfield. The funding for those bands has already been approved. At the same time, they’re trying to get funding. There has been big pressure put on governments to finally pay that to allow for better tourism. If that happens, that will probably prompt someone in Lake Cowichan to establish a business, or a business to come to Lake Cowichan.”
Figure 10 Road routes and surfacing of the Cowichan Lake Region.

Of course, an Indigenous community would seek improvements such as access to their communities’ in order to ensure safer and easier access to services such as medical appointments and services elsewhere in the region. It would also provide those communities’ an opportunity to develop their own economic development strategy. Despite tourism not technically being taken out in the primary area, a knock-on effect may occur. To this extent, developments on those ends of the lake are well underway, with the Ditidaht Development Corporation receiving grants to further develop a campground (Simpson, 2019). By partnering with Indigenous communities and advocating for improvement for their infrastructure to the senior government level, ample opportunity exists to not only better these communities and offer them economic development opportunities but boost their own as well.
While further road linkages to the region are beneficial a community may also want to consider transportation opportunities that are more obtainable for those who may not have the luxury of an automobile. When discussing transportation, one participant mentioned the following:

“Access to food, access to recreation, access to the things that are important in people's lives should not be limited to those of means only. Families need to experience camping. Families need to experience swimming in a natural body of water, not just from the pools. There needs to be an equalization of opportunities for people to enjoy where I live. And that's becoming more and more of a challenge.”

While it is great to advocate for tourism infrastructure, it may not be the most equitable option for those who do not have access to a vehicle. While the Lake Cowichan region is serviced by Cowichan Valley Regional Transit, service primarily occurs throughout the work week, and not during weekends. For example, there are only four services on Saturdays from Duncan to Lake Cowichan, and three on Sunday (BC Transit - Route Overview 7 Cowichan Lake, n.d.). Connecting to areas such as Honeymoon Bay, there is a community bus service which only operates three times on Saturdays and no service Sunday (BC Transit - Route Overview 21 Honeymoon Bay, n.d.). As it stands, it does not appear that these busses connect with each other, making it impossible for someone without a car to take advantage of the area beyond Lake Cowichan. While these services do take up resources, they may be something to consider when further developing a tourism industry in an area,
In the case of Lake Cowichan, there is the unique aspect of major event facilities such as Laketown Ranch. Laketown Ranch is a cleared field along North Shore Road in CVRD Electoral Area I. The facility is specifically designed to host large scale music festivals, and is the home of Sunfest and Laketown Shakedown, two major music festivals. From this, seven of the participants brought up and praised the Laketown Ranch development, speaking very highly of what had been accomplished thus far. As one participant put it:

"We have experienced the development of the Laketown Ranch, which was a great alternative for us, which means more people coming here and participating within our communities."

Of course, not every community can have a large open field exclusively for music festivals. In the case of Lake Cowichan though, it offers a significant opportunity to encourage people to visit the town and its surrounding areas. When participants come to the facility to participate in a music festival, many do not utilize the surrounding town and its amenities. Another participant who happened to be attending a concert at the facility remarked:

"I've had the opportunity to work at events at Laketown Ranch, and that's been a positive experience. There's been a lot of visitors who have been up at events like Sunfest who haven't even gone to the Lake yet."
Based on the previous feedback, there appears to be a need to further engage people who attend the Laketown Ranch with the greater Cowichan Region. There is a large audience there that can contribute towards the business sector in the community, as well as take advantage of other natural opportunities. As mentioned in the section on stakeholder networking, Laketown Ranch was identified as a primary stakeholder to engage with due to its economic impact on the region.

Another opportunity within the region is the Cowichan Lake Recreation Centre. This is a CVRD owned recreation facility, which hosts an arena and curling rink. One participant
remarked this as an opportunity for the community, with it offering a sheet of ice in the arena over the summer.

“We have ice in the summer, when other places on the island do not have ice. We used to have a hockey school. Figure skating started the other day, and they have figure skating things. We have events well all year long that bring in a few people to the arena.”

Once more, there is opportunity to leverage already existing facilities and opportunities to encourage tourism traffic to the community. For a small community with limited resources, being able to utilize already existing infrastructure for unique experiences provides a platform with which to develop opportunities for tourists to come to the community. Another participant echoed this sentiment, noting anecdotally that tourism to the area for sports had been in on the rise in the past few years. For a community such as Lake Cowichan, encouraging users of existing recreational facilities to utilize their facility in a way that attracts people from elsewhere would have a benefit to the town. There is also the idea of the Vancouver Island Motorsports Circuit nearer to Duncan, which has been discussed on in the previous section.

Finally, opportunities exist to develop more hotel beds within the region, although it does not come without challenges. All but one participant stated that there was a lack of hotel rooms or accommodation options in the Cowichan Lake Region. This could be considered both an opportunity and a constraint to the development of further accommodations. One participant observed this dichotomy by saying:
"I do think we need a few more hotels or resorts. But the problem is, in the winter, there just isn't enough going on. It would be difficult for them to stay open. In the summer, we often run short of spaces, there's often a lot of people in here who just can't find places to stay."

This can be a constraint, yet a meaningful opportunity. Much in the same vein as a larger attraction such as the Laketown Ranch, a larger scale hotel or resort development can act as an attraction unto itself. Form this, one of the participants suggested that improving road access to the Cowichan Lake region may make the idea an easier sell. For now though, the lack of hotel rooms constrains the ability for the region to capitalize upon its existing facilities. As one respondent claimed:

"I think that when we used to do the men's curling bonspiel, I think we had over 100 people coming. They can't afford to stay in high end things. They are allowed, by permit to have their mobile homes and fifth wheels in the parking lot at the arena. This is because they can't afford to pay $125 a night for a hotel, since they're already paying for their bonspiel, although some might get together and do it."
Figure 12 Illustration of interviewees feelings around accommodations.

This comment is interesting, as it demonstrates a catch-22; visitors to town cannot necessarily spend money on a hotel room, yet there are no hotel rooms available to spend money on. The idea of carrying capacity does come into play when considering accommodations. As it stands, there are two hotels in the Lake Cowichan Townsite, and a small retreat development in Honeymoon Bay. For a hotel to be viable, it requires traffic year-round; with one participant familiar with the topic stating a 70% occupancy rate is required throughout the year. While there are multiple campgrounds in the region, these are unsurprisingly seasonal operations. For the most part, policy written by the Town of Lake Cowichan and CVRD support further development of hotel accommodations within their respective jurisdictions. For example, the Town of Lake Cowichan’s recently adopted OCP encourages development of hotel and tourist accommodations within areas designated Highway Commercial which are located along North Shore Road and Highway #18, and in Tourist Commercial areas located along the lake and river in downtown Lake Cowichan (Town of Lake Cowichan, 2019,
pp. 52–53). The CVRD also supports larger scale developments of Hotels, primarily in the Youbou area, with zoning and land designations allowing for tourist accommodations in the Tourist Recreational designation and zoning, and a full scale resort development in areas designated as Village Core (Cowichan Valley Regional District, 2005, p. 17,30). Honeymoon Bay and Electoral Area F did not have significant areas of land or references to further tourism development in their OCP. These designations demonstrate that local government overall supports further developments towards accommodation opportunities within the region, and that it seems the only thing that needs to happen is finding a developer willing to take on the financial risk.
Figure 13 Zoning map of Youbou. Village Core zoning denoted by orange shading.

4.4 Challenges of Tourism Development

While the region has many opportunities for development, there can be many challenges and constraints to further tourism development. In the case of resource-based communities, land access where companies may have had their operations may prove to be one of these challenges.

In the course of the interviews conducted, six of the respondents referenced many of the lands around the region being privately held or owned by a management company called Mosaic, which is a company who manages the timberlands on behalf of TimberWest and Island Timberlands. With logging operations
still ongoing in the region, creating agreements in which access to these lands may prove to be challenging. One participant provided some context to the situation:

“There’s the fact that as a result of the E&N land grants, most of the lands in the Cowichan Valley, and especially in the Cowichan Lake area, are privately held forest lands, with Mosaic Land Management being the major land holder. Those are because of the nature of their business and concerns about forest fires. As a result, those lands are mostly gated and blocked off from general public use. That’s a limiting factor for tourism and our area.”

By having restricted forest service roads to protect from liabilities such as forest fires, there is no opportunity for other recreation uses such as ATV riders or mountain bikers to be able to conduct their operations at times when logging is not taking place. It can also stymy building attractions such as hiking trails and other recreational opportunities. To this end, when regional stakeholders came together in 2018 to compile a plan for hiking and mountain biking trails, the multitude of landowners was identified as a major challenge to further trail development (Tourism Vancouver Island, 2018, p. 14). This challenge resulted from the E&N Land Grant, a 19th century agreement between the crown and the Esquimalt and Nanaimo railway, in which large swaths of crown land was given to the company in exchange for the construction of the railway between Nanaimo and Esquimalt (Ekers, 2019, p. 276). As a result of this grant, nearly 23% of all land on Vancouver Island is privately owned, as opposed to the provincial average of 5% private and 95% crown (Ekers, 2019, p. 276). The sentiment shared by the participant is likely shared by other communities.
on Vancouver Island who will have similar interfaces with forestry lands as they try to further develop their tourism industries onto private lands.

There is also further privatisation around facilities such as logging roads that connect other parts of the region, including the Nitinat Lake Area. One participant observed the following opportunity regarding another logging road within the region:

“There’s now an opportunity for the development of a maintained Public Forest Service road out to Nitinat. It runs on the south shore of Cowichan Lake, past the pavement, and past Honeymoon Bay when the road becomes mainly privately owned.”

The respondent brought up further road access as an opportunity for the community to grow upon, and how there is work being conducted with Indigenous communities to enact the vision. However, until such work is finalized, it proves to be problematic to further development in the region.

Despite having one of the largest lakes on Vancouver Island, access to the lake was identified as an issue by at least four of the respondents. Similar to the situation with hiking trails and forestry land access, three respondents observed a similar theme, stating that the lands around the lake are either owned by private landowners, or by the timber companies. This can make acquisitions of land or water access expensive if land needs to be acquired or challenging if an access agreement needs to be reached with private landowners. For the Town itself, this poses to be one of the bigger challenges for water access. For example, the area of the lake closest
to the downtown portion of Lake Cowichan is owned by Catalyst Paper, who operates a weir to control water flows to their pulp mill at Crofton. One of the contributors had lived in the region for many years and had experience with some of the agreements in place to help facilitate water access. One participant noted that despite the construction of the weir, the Town in the 1950s had the foresight to lease some of the lands closest to the town that were now being utilized by Catalyst to benefit the community. Today, the Town’s facilities are underdeveloped and are adjacent to residential neighbourhoods. These may not be compatible with future tourism developments due to impacts on the nearby neighbourhoods. One participant echoed these challenges further, providing historical context to how this came to be:

“TimberWest owns the bottom of our lake and the bottom of our river. This is the problem with the E&N land grant in the early 1900s, that they got all the mountains around here. This agreement might have been in the 1860s and was never rescinded. It's too bad that was not rescinded back because it has caused a lot of anxiety around our Lake, not just in town but in the surrounding areas. They sold 50-acre plots all around the lake to consortiums of people who now have little campgrounds all around the lake, meaning we have no place to go if you want to put your boat in or have a picnic. There are a few places to put your boat in, but not many. That has caused a lot of angst in the area for people that have lived here a long time, while the newcomers don't mind at all because they've now got a house on the lake.”

Another participant echoed the same sentiment, calling back to the issue with developing trails stemming from this long-standing land grant. This may explain why water accesses such as the town-owned floating boardwalk, and a CVRD owned
floating boardwalk in Youbou exist in those harder to access locations, with easier to acquire land being available in those areas. Furthermore, development on lands owned by the timber companies which may be sold off to private developers post-logging operations will also monopolize public space on the water’s edge, further hindering access to the lake’s edge.

Figure 14 Underdeveloped public water access immediately south of Catalyst Weir.

The carrying capacity of the region is also something which was of concern to the participants. These concerns took up three different themes:

1. Environmental Concerns;
2. Emergency Response; and

3. Community Ability.

From this, five respondents stated that issues related to the environmental capacity of the area posed a threat to not only the area but the tourism industry itself. Two of these respondents mentioned that tubing down the river posed a problem to the environment. These concerns were centered around tubers using sunscreen, with chemicals that leach into the river further harming the environment. This sentiment was a frequent one within the community, with one respondent stating:

“Last summer the big issue was sunscreen. Sunscreen was damaging the fish populations. This year, they’ve really done their best to combat that. Every shop sells river safe sunscreen, Tube Shack provides it for free, I think O.R.K.A does too.”

While this may continue to be an environmental challenge, it also demonstrates that the community is willing to find a way to mitigate the challenges in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of the river. To this theme, one other respondent also mentioned that tourism development should not come at the cost of environmental wellbeing, citing a recent logging operation conducted near the lake in order to provide room for more cabins on the lake.

Another concern for further development was the potential impacts that climate change could have on the river and general area. Three participants were particularly concerned on the role of climate change and river water levels shortening the tubing season. There is no denying the impact that tubing has on the region’s
tourism industry, with water activities such as tubing being the third most inquired about activity at the visitor’s centre during the 2019 season (Cowichan Lake Visitors Centre, 2019). These reactions are expected, as community members look to ensure that one of their primary attractions is sustainable even in the face of climate change. As one participant commented:

“One of the issues with tubing is climate change, which will have an impact to continue with this. A lower water level in the river means a shorter period in which it may be viable to do. ”

Depending on one specific tourism-based activity, especially one dependant on environmental factors could harm Lake Cowichan’s tourism prospects moving forward. With climate change altering the landscape and natural features of the region, developing and mitigating realities resulting from this may prove challenging.

Another carrying capacity concern was around emergency response, especially considering large scale events being held at Laketown Ranch. Two respondents commented on this topic, with the consideration of the fact that many of the fire departments in the region are volunteer services. One respondent commented on a situation which occurred during the earlier years of the Laketown Ranch:

“If it’s a long weekend most of the guys there have other plans. Since the guys are gone and not around, our fire department thought it would be nice to tie a few of these guys down in case Laketown Ranch needed them. Laketown Ranch then said, ‘Don’t worry about it we’ve got it under control.’”
With the volunteer nature of the emergency services, there could be a limited ability to respond to major emergencies that may arise. The other respondent also raised the concern about emergency response in the lens of climate change:

“It's the unexpected emergencies, whether it be wildfire, significant seismic event. It's a small community there in the first place, if there was a festival activity over a long weekend, and access by emergency responders was limited, there would be some challenges. So it's welcoming people to your community but having the capacity and the ability to look after them in the event of natural disasters.”

With both these comments, there is a concern over how the emergency services could respond to a major emergency, such as a forest fire or earthquake that could occur while a festival may be on at Laketown Ranch. Considering the fact that the year-round population of the area is around 5,000, and a festival could easily double the population, it is easy to understand the concern of emergency services not having the resource to assist for this temporary jump of population.

Finally, a major component of carrying capacity is mitigating the impact to the residents of the community. As one participant humorously noted:

“When people joke in Youbou, they say that they going to have a big party in September because all the tourists are gone.”

Three participants echoed concerns about resident’s capacity to balance the influx of tourists to the region. Concerns ranged from overcrowding in downtown to tubers disrupting the peace on the river. By encouraging the development of further
tourism in a region, it would only serve to further inflame these concerns, much in line with what has occurred in the literature. There is also some level of localism at play, especially considering the further development of hiking and cycling trails. As one participant observed:

“Trail users that are residents get frustrated when they put a lot of their own volunteer effort and labor into building trails. Then guests come and mountain bike and don't necessarily contribute to trail development.

I think that communication plays a part of it. I haven't heard about on trail friction between resident riders and visiting riders. I think that like residents are often happy to share their trails. It's more with the organization responsible for maintaining the trails where there's just a higher cost. Whether it's volunteer time, or actually paid staff.”

Amenities such as these are coveted by both residents and visitors, with visitors often wanting to take advantage of them just as much as a resident would want to. For some who have houses and businesses on the river, these users can cause consternation. One participant described the experience as such:

“If anyone wants to stay in pristine area, the river, they go there. But then of course, the tubers will bug some of their clients because they sit on the riverbank and are enjoying themselves. Next thing, you know, as the tubers come by, the ambience is ruined.”

This can be one of the reasons that one may want to develop other attractions and opportunities, in order to take the pressure off highly trafficked venues. With both locals and tourists utilizing these public goods, it is easy to understand how
ideas of localism then come into play. Communication seems to be a way to help mitigate these concerns, especially when peak season comes along. At the same time, this could be seen as sentiments of “Not in My Backyard,” or NIMBY-ism. These sentiments are naturally formed by residents who see that their community is changing, and are attempting to ensure that these changes do not negatively impact them (Litvin et al., 2019, p. 2). In the case of tourism development, these sentiments can be traced to the impact that they are having on those residents, with the residents most impacted not gaining the benefits that the industry is having (Litvin et al., 2019, p. 2). Considering all this, the first commentator presented a solution to this challenge:

“There are ways that the tourism industry can contribute back, perhaps sponsoring trail build days or offering incentives to those groups who build trails.”

With the first respondent’s comments, their suggestion was one which was designed to smooth over concerns of tourism development operations with the residents; with finances generated by tourism operations being put back into amenities appreciated by residents and tourists alike. This was discussed in the literature review, in which residents do not necessarily get the positive benefits of the tourism industry and only feel the impacts of overcrowding. This suggestion may prove to be an option to help manage these concerns.

One of the major challenges that a community can struggle with is seasonality. With activities such as tubing and lake-based activities being preferable in the summer months, the challenge is trying to develop activities that make the region more attractive year-round. To this end, participants were concerned with this
aspect to tourism development, with four participants citing this as a challenge for their community to overcome. It was for this reason that one participant lent their support to the further development of mountain biking trails in the region, stating:

“We are trying to figure out other things you can do in the shoulder season. The biking is obviously one since they go all winter long, so long as it's not snowing. They go in the rain, they don't care. They do it at Whistler too.”

Of course, this may be challenging for a community to develop, especially considering the proximity to other mountain biking trails on Vancouver Island. When considering winter tourism, another participant agreed that solely relying on summertime activities and opportunities only serves to act as a barrier to a sustainable tourism industry in the region. They stated that:

“It's all summer tourism, really. I think a big weakness is that tourism just doesn't provide full time jobs all year long. So, we need to develop winter tourism, if it's going to be something that's going to sustain people year long.”

Without opportunities for off-season tourism, coupled with the summer-based opportunities only lasting part of the year, communities may struggle to ensure that their tourism industry is a year-round sustainable economic driver. This is one of the reasons that the region chose to consider mountain biking trails as a form of tourism development, with that activity being able to be conducted year-round as opposed to seasonally. In the past, events such as markets and festivals have been tried in order to provide something to attract people to the area during the sparse
winter months. One participant noted about the challenge of developing events in the community, with a specific observation:

“We had a salmon and mushroom festival run by another lady who’s now in her 80s, but she can’t do it anymore. They had loads of people in here, featuring the mushrooms you can eat around here and a salmon barbecue. But we sort of lost that. So when you lose something, you got to figure out what can we put there. I think the mountain biking will replace that.”

With an aging population who may lead initiatives such as the mountain biking trails or the aforementioned festival, having such resources to plan winter events may prove to be a challenge. This case though demonstrates the challenge of these arrangements, with the loss of a key volunteer causing the loss of an entire event. While small communities often have dedicated members who lead the charge on developing such festivals, minimal capacity and knowledge between members in volunteer organizations can cause these challenges.

Finally, one perception of the community that poses a challenge to tourism development is the region’s geographical location. Being thirty kilometers inland, four of the nine contributors mentioned that there was a “end of the road” mentality to the region, meaning that the community was too far off the “beaten path” to attract casual vehicle traffic. As one long time observer noted:

“The Cowichan Lake area was always considered sort of an end of the road community. Folks from Victoria recreated in Shawinigan Lake, the people from
Nanaimo normally would go north or to the mainland. Cowichan Lake had not been discovered in mainstream tourism promotion activities, despite the great work of the local Chamber of Commerce and the Visitor Info Center. The conditions and the access were not right yet for tourism to grow to the to be the sector that it is today."

While there is improved access to the region today via Highway #18 or the Marine Circle Route, transportation links and the ease of access to other destinations can prove to be a hinderance to tourism. Comparing the example of Shawinigan lake, it is only 8.5 Kilometres away from access off Highway #1. For potential visitors to the region, they may consider more accessible opportunities especially if what the Cowichan Lake region is offering is available in easier to access areas.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Summary of Findings

While tourism is important to the community, it would be incorrect to assume the perception that it is a be-all and end all to a community’s economic wellbeing. For a resource-based community to instantly view tourism as a holy grail in the wake of an event such as the sawmill closures at Youbou and Honeymoon Bay, a community must be mindful that while lucrative, it may not offset the level of economic support that a region needs to continue being viable. This can be further emphasised by the experience seen in the Cowichan Lake region, with many tourism opportunities occurring during the warmer summer months. This being said, participants did agree at the fact that the turndown in the forestry industry did lead to the community to look to capitalize on a small, but already existing tourism sector. For a community considering developing tourism in the wake of industrial downturn, attention must be paid to ensuring the community has opportunities to offer tourists year-round. This may make the development of an industry more resilient and be more fulfilling for the community, as opposed to only having the tourism industry be relevant to the community for a short period in a year. Having a tourism industry work year-round is important, as it ensures that jobs are available for people throughout the entire year, as opposed to the short summer month period. The availability of jobs year-round will help enable the community stays viable, even in the wake of a major industry collapsing.
Another major takeaway is the role that tourism plays in the bigger economic development picture in a community. By offering a product for visitors to entice them to visit the community, it also acts as a catalyst for others to come to the community and set up businesses and enhance economic development. As emphasised by the responses provided by multiple respondents, encouraging tourism to the region will help their town grow by promoting their region. For a planner or economic development officer looking to justify spending money on developing tourism at a municipal level, this could act as further reasoning to provide to elected officials to support the scheme. Moreover, it would provide some baseline economic development, providing two opportunities for the price of one. A municipality must keep in mind that there are many other communities who will have the same set of circumstances and same ideas of expanding and investing in their tourism capacities to boost economic development. This means the product that is produced will need to compete with other destinations outside of its immediate region. In order to capitalize on tourism in the region, the community will need to leverage its assets, both physical and social in order to ensure their efforts are reward long term.

Unsurprisingly, communities that wish to develop tourism must take advantage of their natural surroundings and incorporate existing infrastructure into the plan. In the case of the Cowichan Lake region, there are many opportunities for development using its natural surroundings, such as mountains and the lake itself. Unfortunately, these lands have significant challenges in order to be utilized, since much of the access to these features is either privately owned or held by large scale resource operators. With large swaths of land being locked off or privately built upon, it can be a challenge for a municipality to consider building trails or increase water accesses to improve tourism accessibility. Within the
Cowichan Lake case, this is more than likely why many of the prime water accesses are far away from the town centre and can only be accessed by private vehicle. As the only land available at the time, these accesses demonstrate that communities will attempt to provide access to those natural features even if the area of which it is being constructed is less than ideal. We do see groups such as the Lake Cowichan Trailblazers, try to work through these challenges in order to develop opportunities such as the mountain bike trails seen in the 2018 hiking and cycling plan. This saw not only that local advocacy group, but local and regional government, as well as Indigenous Nations and tourism officials work together to overcome challenges of land access in the area. This resulted in gaining letters of support from various private landowners for the development of the future trail network in the area.

Overall, it appears that the best way to approach tourism development in the region is via engaging with the greater Cowichan Lake and Cowichan Valley Region. With funds being limited within the region of study, it may be prudent to work together much in the same vein that the region is currently doing. This does come with its own challenges especially considering the Town of Lake Cowichan itself is the primary service centre for the Cowichan Lake Region. As accentuated by the interviews, community members could be put on edge especially as tourists visit their town and utilize the services the town itself has on offer. When developing tourism in such areas, especially those where the community is smaller, consideration must be given to ensure that the areas are able to support a large influx of travellers, especially if they are potentially passing through to other portions of the area. This may lead to specific areas of the region being burdened by the development within the regional context.
Figure 15 Chart of some of the main actions a planner undertakes in tourism development.

When considering the whole project, the role of the community planner is one which helps facilitate connections and undertakes practical policy maneuvers. Overall, the project seemed to focus on some main themes; community engagement and consultation, addressing of carrying capacity, opportunity development and long-range planning. All of these skills are items of which a community planner utilizes within their day to day duties. The research and project determined that while planners can create tourism development plans at a larger scale, the day to day operations of creating policy and working with the community are some of the most practical tasks that can be undertaken for a small community when developing the industry.
5.2 Main Takeaways

For communities such as the Cowichan Lake region as well as other communities on Vancouver Island, the research conducted demonstrates an emphasis towards working with stakeholders. Considering the unique challenges of forestry lands on Vancouver Island, communities should work with the large forestry companies to create land use agreements to utilize those private lands and natural features, acknowledging that these agreements can be challenging to complete successfully. With the state of the forestry industry in British Columbia being frequently in flux, creating opportunities in order to provide for economic resilience in such forestry focussed communities is important. By allowing access for groups to build trails for tourism, forestry companies can potentially alleviate angst within their communities. This can be seen through the idea of social licencing, where corporations go beyond their legal and regulatory duties within a community, by building relationships and addressing concerns of the community itself when conducting its duties (Gartner et al., 2012, p. 198). By finding allies in not only government sectors, but private tour operators, as well as large timber companies can provide for new accesses that were not previously considered. By carving out unique trails and recreation opportunities, it could provide unique opportunities for growth in a community in general. In the case of the Cowichan Lake region, consideration could be given to All-Terrain-Vehicle based tourism, considering that sanctioned ATV touring routes are limited on Vancouver Island. By focussing on ATV tourism, it would offer a unique experience for ATV riders on the mid-South Island. Perhaps further partnerships should be formed with such groups who organize ATV rides or other such activities, in the same vein that the Lake Cowichan Trailblazers were engaged with when developing the cycle and trail master plan. This demonstrates that in order to get the best results, engaging with those who
may be naturally be organizing such events in a community and region may provide insight to the development of tourism in an area not considered by traditional sources.

Financially, being able to develop tourism could prove to be a challenge for communities that are financially strapped. Resource based communities may experience this and may wish to look towards partnerships with other governments and authorities to make their tourism desires come true. It is for this reason that tourism development in a municipality should be approached from a regional perspective. This way, a more encompassing strategy can be created that serves the community and is able to maximize the funds that are generated. For a smaller community struggling from the loss of an industry such as forestry, revenues incoming to the community may simply be lacking and funding locally may also be limited. In the Cowichan Lake area, the larger Tourism Cowichan organization has been that overarching body, to the seeming acclaim of all stakeholders interviewed. By having an independent body that all communities can pay into to take care of marketing and minor development, it seems that it is easier to develop buy-in from businesses and local governments. For a planner in the community, this may be a good touch point to develop recreational opportunities such as trails; very much in the same vein as the recently completed tourism trails plan. For a community that may not have the same economic development infrastructure as a larger centre, it may be advisable to work with nearby local governments and Indigenous communities in order to create a working group and terms of reference to further economic development. The region should also continue to pursue grants for tourism development. There could be potential to lobby the provincial government to get the area declared a *Resort Municipality*, however this program does not appear to be taking any new applicants and would be a very long-term goal.
Furthermore, working with Indigenous Nations such as the Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation and Ditidaht Nation should be prioritized. While the existing LIFT group encompasses the Ts’uubba-asatx Nation, the Ditidaht are not present within this infrastructure. This is unfortunate, considering this Nation is developing their own tourism destination opportunities at the opposite end of the lake. Further paving and upgrading of the road that goes around the Lake to the Ditidaht Nation will serve to improve access to their lands, increasing tourism traffic to not only to Ditidaht Nation, but to the surrounding region. Furthermore, by working with the Ditidaht, it may result in more visits to the Cowichan Lake area as visitors look to visit some of the unique opportunities that the Ditidaht Territories may offer. Knowing the impact that Indigenous tourism already has within British Columbia, further growth in this area will only mean increased opportunities for Ditidaht Nation and the Ts’uubba-asatx community. There has been a growth in Indigenous tourism opportunities, with 13 new businesses opening between 2016 and 2017, bringing the total to 86 on the Island alone (O’Neil, 2018, p. 37). This same report also noted that Indigenous tourism operators are expecting further growth throughout the province, with tourism market conditions when the study was done in 2018 seeming to lend themselves to this continued growth (O’Neil, 2018). Working with Indigenous Nations when developing tourism can be a meaningful experience for both communities especially within a rural Vancouver Island Context. It is regrettable that I was unable to speak to either the Ts’uubba-asatx or Ditidaht.

Access to a community can prove to be a challenge as well. While the Cowichan Lake area is away from Highway #1 in Duncan, it is still within a reasonable distance to capitalize on further tourism development opportunities. There is also the added value of other connections to the West Coast of Vancouver Island as well as public transport to Duncan. For
many communities that may have more challenging geographic constraints, this can serve to be a huge barrier to further tourism development. While having a solid attraction to capitalize upon is a benefit, problematic access will only limit a community’s ability to capitalize upon it. From this, community members did outline this as a challenge and as a perceived threat to the development of the tourism industry in the community; with it being easier to go to other more accessible destinations, ultimately leading tourists to not consider the region. This perception from the community members may stymie the further development of tourism in the community. In order to overcome these perceptions and challenges, the community may wish to work with groups such as the Regional District or Provincial Government to improve road accesses or public transportation services within the region. An easier win could also be simply encouraging marketing for the destination online, as well as augmenting the existing strategies through Tourism Cowichan. If anything, it may help break that perception of the community being off the “beaten track.” Financial constraints were frequently cited as the reason why the region had not conducted larger scale marketing campaigns. This could prove to be a conflict for communities, whether to fund opportunities that would act as experiences and opportunities for tourism, or the marketing portion of tourism.

A larger scale project that could be lobbied for is the improvement of logging roads which connect the region to Port Alberni, Bamfield and Nitinat. Much in the same vein as trails for recreation, this would require significant negotiations and work between the provincial Government and the timber companies. However, if completed they would not only further connect the region with the rest of Vancouver Island, but likely offer a significant increase in tourist traffic to the community in the same way that the creation of the Pacific Marine Route did when implemented back in 2009. This point can be very evident for other logging road
dependent communities throughout Vancouver Island, with poor road conditions potentially giving visitors pause when deciding where to visit.

Communities must be mindful of the impacts that tourism will have on their communities. As seen in the Cowichan Lake example, residents of the region find themselves often crowded out of their own spaces, leading to conflicts between residents and visitors. While physical friction towards tourists does not exist, it may pose a challenge for communities looking to develop a tourism industry. In the case of Lake Cowichan, opportunity exists to offer opportunities that are away from the river, and instead are on the lake itself. For a community with unique features that may not necessarily be in a convenient location to the community core, these could be opportunities to further develop tourism and ensure access to features of which the community is proud of. Shuttle services can be expensive to operate and may struggle to be justified when other projects in the community require funding. On the other hand, signage and clear information can be a low-cost way for a community to advertise and advise tourists of potential beach accesses that may not necessarily be within the town itself. As discussed in the literature review, consistent, concise and clear visitor signage can dramatically improve a visitor’s perception of a destination, as well as direct visitors to unique opportunities and areas that may not have as much tourist traffic. The region may also want to expand its “Mobile Visitor Centre Unit” program to the outlying areas, providing human contact in areas where signage and directions to water access may not be as legible as it is in the community itself.

Considering the provision of emergency services, smaller communities may struggle to ensure that they have the appropriate amount of staff to respond during peak seasons. With the majority of Cowichan Lake Fire Departments being volunteer services, there may be
some challenges ensuring that there are enough resources to tend to the influx of visitors. For other municipalities in more isolated contexts, finding money and staffing capacity may hem the ability to respond to emergencies affecting visitors to the region. With communities that host events in facilities such as Laketown Ranch, it may be prudent to work out a fair agreement with the local governments of the region to ensure that emergency service coverage is available in the event a situation arises. However, a community that does not have such opportunities may require other arrangements with tourism operators if a large influx that cannot be anticipated arises. Within our case study, it is reasonable for the Town of Lake Cowichan and other area emergency services to work with Laketown Ranch and ensure that there is an emergency response plan in place for events at the venue should a major incident occur. The Town and Region may also wish to conduct further emergency planning for peak weekends during the summer, ensuring the regional emergency services are able to respond to whatever emergencies may arise.

Communities may face a chicken or egg scenario when developing tourism, especially when planning for larger infrastructure such as hotels. While the idea of carrying capacity focusses on environmental impacts, it can easily be extrapolated to economic capacity as well. As mentioned in the discussion section, almost every respondent stated that the lack of hotel rooms in the Cowichan Lake Region was a constraint to the development of tourism in the region yet served as an opportunity to further grow the industry. Once more, the challenge lies in the fact that the community’s tourism industry is almost entirely based on summer activities. As a result, a larger scale hotel development may struggle to gain year-round occupancy in order to make it viable. At the same time, the Cowichan Lake area does have ample opportunity for a large-scale development, with empty mill sites at Youbou and
Honeymoon Bay lending themselves to development of a resort. The question here is; who would come to such a development in the winter, and for what activities? It is possible that a resort development itself could act as a major attraction to the region, alongside serving the needs of travellers in the winter months. However, this is where communities should consider the four groups of travellers who could potentially come to the region in order to decide who would make use of such facility, much like what was outlined in the literature. Perhaps this is something which could be developed in conjunction with attraction operations such as Laketown Ranch, the motorsports circuit and even the Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation, with their unique opportunities creating a product which is uniquely Cowichan Lake. While the logistics of such an arrangement may be more for a tourism student to discuss, developing packages and experiences that draw in all the region’s main tourism opportunities for visitors to experience may provide potential visitors an incentive to see the region. Furthermore, development of a project along the water could even allow for further public water access.

For other communities, this will undoubtedly be one of the toughest things to justify and develop, even with support from stakeholders. Perhaps this is something which is the needed ingredient to make a successful hotel operation; a unique experience which provides opportunity for accommodation operators to tail upon.

With the continued development, the region will also want to find ways to balance the influx of people who visit the community in the summer. This was identified as a concern by many of the participants, although it was appreciated as a side effect of the tourism industry. Because it is the primary service centre for the region, the Lake Cowichan Townsite may bear the brunt of traffic to the region. While the recently adopted OCP does refer to further
development of downtown to support tourism-based operations, further consideration may be required to the mitigation of such issues.

Communities may also want to ensure that they are able to be resilient when considering the potential impacts of climate change. Climate change in the Cowichan Lake area could take the form of lower water levels on the lake and river, equating to less opportunity for water-based tourism opportunities such as boating and tubing. Higher instances of forest fires as seen across British Columbia in recent years could lead to poor air quality leading to tourists choosing to stay away from the area. These would have a negative impact to the industry, meaning any gains in tourism could be for naught. With continuing uncertainty around the effects of climate change, the community will want to develop tourism alongside other industries and economic development as opposed to having tourism as that solitary economic driver. Climate Change could also have a negative impact on river and lake water levels, which would impact opportunities that could be developed as well as existing infrastructure such as beaches and floating boardwalks. With Catalyst Paper controlling the weir which controls water flows down the Cowichan River, the region may want to further collaborate with the company in order to ensure that water flows are sustainable during drought conditions. There may also be concerns to the access to infrastructure such as the floating boardwalks and docks if water levels continue to drop.

Finally and importantly, the region should continue to develop projects that ensure that tourism can still be undertaken even in the winter months. With flagship activities such as boating and tubing being a fair-weather activity, coupled with most events at Laketown Ranch occurring during that same timeframe relying on these activities to develop tourism year-round is simply unsustainable. Because of this, the
community is starting to further develop opportunities for the rest of the year. As seen with the example of the Mushroom and Salmon Festival, the retirement of a key volunteer can lead to a key experience that draws tourists being lost during the period. With the Mushroom and Salmon festival occurring in the Fall period, losing this can have implications for a community looking to offer experiences other than the busy summer months. Tourism opportunities developed by volunteer organizations must continue to be embraced by local governments, potentially with more professional support in the planning process. This would ensure that even in the event of a retirement of a key volunteer, there is still infrastructure in place for continuity in order to ensure that the development of such festivals still takes place. This may be rolled into the tourism and destination development organization that exists in the region. Of course, the main challenge of such a position would be the finances of the region not being able to uphold a paid position. Perhaps this type of staff should be based at a more regional level, in order to ensure the resource can be shared amongst other communities who may also need professional support for their own events.

5.3 Further Work

While this project provided a very general overview of the development of tourism in the Cowichan Lake region, there are gaps that could not be feasibly covered within the year of study. Future researchers many wish to look towards the role that Indigenous peoples and communities play in the development of tourism both in the Cowichan Lake region, as well as Vancouver Island as a whole. For the Cowichan Lake region, participants in the project spoke very highly of both the Ditidaht and Ts’uubba-asatx First Nation’s tourism development
operations. There is a desire to work with the Indigenous communities whose traditional lands fall within the region and is something that should be embraced further.

Future studies could also include a more in-depth examination of water access in the Cowichan Lake Region, with an eye to the best practices to mitigate the challenges that climate change could pose to the wellbeing of the lake and access. While this major project identified some examples of water access that could be improved, there is the potential for the region to further develop water and beach access to capitalize on this natural asset. One may also want to investigate the role that private vacation homes play in the fabric of the region, as some participants mentioned these homes in their responses and the impacts that they have on affordability, utilities servicing, as well as water access to the lake and river.

One of the big challenges with this type of work is the requirement of finances. With this work being undertaken as part of a master’s degree, resources were naturally very limited. One may want to consider finding grants or even scholarships if a similar project is being launched within another community, especially if being done as part of a master’s project.

If someone were to conduct this study for their own major project, they may want to make their presence known more in the community. While most participants were more than pleased to take part in the project, it would have been preferable to have spoken to more members of the business community within the region. This could have been facilitated through closer connections with the chamber of commerce, Indigenous communities or through town hall. Future attempts at this study may want to consider alternate public engagement options, such as a survey or further advertising for outreach events, in order to gauge public ideas and perceptions more thoroughly.
While there were many constraints and limitations in my research, I was able to engage with many community members who provided insight into tourism in the region. Considering the fact that many of the interviewees had lived in the region for many years, as well as had experience within the tourism industry in the area, the research did provide an overview on how small communities with limited resources might want to approach the development of tourism. My hope is that this work provides advice that the Lake Cowichan Region can utilize in the future to develop their tourism offerings further and provide a case study for similar communities who are looking to build tourism as an industry as a result of a decline in the resource industry.
References


Catano, G., Stoddart, M. C., & Vodden, K. (2017). *Regional Tourism Networks and Social-Environmental Wellbeing in Rural Coastal Communities.* Memorial University of Newfoundland.


?bidId=


Livingstone, B. (2017, August 20). Cumberland a Comox Valley gem; Village has gone from coal mining town to outdoor adventure lifestyle destination. *The Province; Vancouver, B.C., B.12.*


Mapping References

Licence Statements

QGIS is licenced under the GNU General Public Licence. http://www.gnu.org/licences

Spatial data is managed by the GIS Section, Information Technology, Corporate Services Department of the Cowichan Valley Regional District.

Contains information licensed under the Open Government Licence – British Columbia.

Data Citations


Appendix A.

Lake Cowichan Findings Booklet
FROM FORESTRY TO FUN
TOURISM AND PLANNING ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

WELCOME TO THE TOWN OF
LAKE COWICHAN
A VIBRANT COMMUNITY A VALUED ENVIRONMENT

By Seamus McConville
Master of Community Planning Candidate
Vancouver Island University
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Process</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Themes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiking, Biking and</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorized Recreation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake and Water Access</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events and Festivals</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and Transportation</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayfinding and Impact</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Tourism is becoming a major part of economies across Vancouver Island, especially those based in the resource development sector. Tourism as an economic engine has a different set of experiences to capitalize on and challenges to mitigate when compared to status-quo resource extraction operations.

With a focus on tourism, community planning will need to focus on separate issues from the challenges previously faced within the resource extraction context. This can include a focus on co-ordination, especially with other regional actors who also consider tourism as a sector they may want to further develop.

From this, I elected to study community planning’s role in tourism, with knowledge being focussed on the Vancouver Island context. From this, I required a case study region, preferably in an area which had less than 10,000 residents, and no formal Tourism Development Plan in effect.

The Lake Cowichan region, Including Youbou, Honeymoon Bay and the Town of Lake Cowichan fit this criteria, with the appropriate population as well as a lack of a comprehensive Tourism Development Plan.

This work was conducted out of interest towards communities based in the resource sector, and what happens when that industry declines. I also wanted to understand tourism from a planning perspective, and what challenges and opportunities are perceived when developing tourism as an economy.
While tourism on Vancouver Island has been studied by other students, it has been done so from a leisure management perspective. This work focused on community planning’s role in the development of tourism, with a focus on what local government can do to further develop such opportunities.

Generally, I hope that the main document of the major project can provide insights into how communities based in the resource sector adapt to changes in its economic situation. I also hope it can provide communities on Vancouver Island trends, experiences and best practices when developing an alternate economic base.

For the Cowichan Lake region, I hope this work is able to provide some insights into perceptions and issues within the current state of the tourism industry in the community, as well as future opportunities and ideas to further boost the tourism project in the region.

This document has been produced to fulfill the completion of a major project in the Master of Community Planning program, with the bulk of that work summarized in this document. Please feel free to reference the full text for the full details of the project.
In Person Interviews
Nine interviews were undertaken with stakeholders within the region. These stakeholders were sought out due to their role within the region. From this, interviewees consisted of local government staff, elected officials as well as individuals directly involved in the tourism industry in the region. Anonymity was guaranteed for those who took part in the interview process.

Public Engagement
Two pop-up engagement sessions were undertaken in the region, in order to gauge public interest and perceptions of tourism. Questions were also asked regarding natural features and other experiences that could be undertaken in the region.

Observational Data
Observational data was collected from multiple visits to the region, with myself playing the role of tourist to the region. This included looking for accommodations, things to do, water access as well as food options.
The project came to multiple conclusions, with the following broad themes influencing the discussion in the project:

- **Industry Downturn**
  Every participant in the interviews agreed that a lessened presence of the forest industry in the region led to stakeholders in the area to consider industries such as tourism.

- **Catalyst for Growth**
  Participants were unanimous when considering tourism as a catalyst, with the industry providing a way to demonstrate the region to potential investors who may come back and set up a business.

- **Collaboration**
  Participants agreed that working together when developing a tourism industry is crucial. This includes working with like minded groups within the Cowichan Lake Region, as well as the greater Cowichan Valley.

- **Ease of Access**
  Participants expressed overall concern about their region's distance from the rest of the Island, which may hamper the further development of tourism.
RECOMMENDATIONS
COWICHAN LAKE AREA

With the previous topics in mind, the following recommendations are posed, specific to the Cowichan Lake Region.

The recommendations are generated from the data collected during the course of the research.

The following pages present strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints related to six key themes that were frequently referenced during the research. Each section has a discussion on how to capitalize on each theme, with a note on what community planners should consider when developing tourism opportunities in their communities.
Hiking, Biking and Motorized Recreation
CURRENT CONDITIONS
HIKING, BIKING AND MOTORIZED RECREATION

Strengths

- Pride for existing trails in the community.
- Western terminus of the Trans Canada Trail within the Lake Cowichan Townsite.
- Strong culture for motorized recreation, such as All Terrain Vehicles and Dirt Bikes.
- Groups looking to develop trails embraced by the general public and stakeholders within the area.
- Recently completed Trails and Cycling Tourism plan provides guidelines to develop these opportunities.

Weaknesses

- Privately owned land is common throughout the region, making access to build trails challenging.
- Active forestry operations make non-forestry uses hard to manage and balance.
- Limited financial resources to upkeep trails in the area.
- Multiple jurisdictions (BC Parks, Town of Lake Cowichan, Cowichan Valley Regional District) having control over trails and associated maintenance operations.

Opportunities

- Engaged non-profit and volunteer groups who are wanting to develop recreational opportunities.
- Already existing trail and cycle infrastructure within the community to build off of.
- Untapped potential for development of motorized recreation opportunities on Vancouver Island.
- Growing tourism demand on Vancouver Island provides a basis to develop further opportunities for visitors.

Constraints

- Other Vancouver island jurisdictions are focussing on trails as a form of tourism development.
- Financial resources are limited in the area.
- Forestry companies who may be weary for further access to timber lands.
- Volunteer groups leading the charge of trail development may not have resources and ability to continue development of trails long term.
Outdoor recreation was highlighted by many participants in the project and should be expanded upon.

The following recommendations address those concerns.

- Continuing development of relationships with timber companies such as Mosaic to gain access agreements to further developments in the lands within the region.
- Development of partnerships with recreational motorized vehicle groups in order to develop routes for these activities.
- Engaging with Ts'uu T'aa·l First Nation to develop culturally sensitive recreational experiences.
- Work with stakeholders from all jurisdictions within the region to develop new routes for non-motorized trails, in line with the Trail Tourism Plan created in 2018.
- Work with the timber companies to develop access agreements specifically for recreational motorized vehicle users.
- Consider a heritage walking trail, with stops interpreting Indigenous History as well as the forestry legacy at various points around the Lake.

Planners in general will have to work with these types of operations. They should consider the following:

- Trails are a popular amenity to consider, acting as a benefit to both locals and tourists alike.
- Partnerships are important, especially when there are constraints of private land and funding.
- Existing industries and their requirements can stymy the development of opportunities in a community.
WATER ACCESS

❤️ our lake
CURRENT CONDITIONS
WATER ACCESS

Strengths
- Exceptionally clean and safe water within the river and lake.
- Some existing facilities around the lake are excellent, offering water access to guests and residents alike.
- Established water-based activities such as tubing are a flagship activity for the region and a major summer draw.
- Cowichan Lake and River acts as a source of pride for the community.

Weaknesses
- Inconsistent amenities and signage for water access due to multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Some water accesses are far away from the town centre, making them hard to access without a vehicle.
- Facilities, such as marinas are operating at capacity, with limited facilities to launch and dock boats.
- Some water accesses are run down, lack amenities and are hard to locate.

Opportunities
- Existing water accesses already exist within the region, with simple upgrades such as signage and facilities improving the experience.
- Further accommodation for low impact and growing water sports such as paddle boarding and kayaking.
- New Lake Cowichan OCP has provision for further public water accesses along the water.
- Tubing companies are mindful of their businesses environmental impact.

Constraints
- Potential for lower water levels due to more frequent droughts.
- Catalyst Weir operations potentially further impacting water levels in the lake.
- Private landowners along water courses may not be open to further public water access development.
- Water-based activities are seasonal, meaning they are only viable April—September.
- Funding to develop new and existing accesses may be hard to come by.
The Cowichan Lake and River are sources of pride for the community, and a prized attraction from visitors.

The following should be considered:

- Work with other jurisdictions (CVRD Parks and Recreation, Town of Lake Cowichan, BC Parks as well as the Ts’uubaa-asatx First Nation) to create a common standard of amenities at water access.
- Finances depending, consider the upgrade of existing water access that are underdeveloped.
- Work with tubing companies to help mitigate negative impacts to the environment and neighbours that their operations may have.
- Consider further development of boat launches and marina developments, with consideration to non-motorized lake users.
- Develop and advertise places to launch non-motorized water activities such as paddleboard and kayaks.
- Further advertise other public lake accesses in the outlying areas of Honeymoon Bay, Mesachie Lake and Youbou to take pressure off of beach access in Lake Cowichan and the Cowichan River.

Water access is universally important, with planners wanting to consider the following:

- Water access is a prized amenity for community members, meaning communities with water features may want to cast an eye to planning for access.
- Once potential water accesses are placed on private lands, regaining access is exceptionally hard to come by.
- Water access may need to consider the future realities of climate change.
EVENTS AND FESTIVALS
CURRENT CONDITIONS

EVENTS AND FESTIVALS—LARGE SCALE

Strengths

- Events such as Laketown Shakedown and Sunfest bring in thousands to the region for each event, providing a major boost to the community’s profile and economy during event weeks.
- Provide an attraction for visitors who may not have originally considered visiting the region.
- Large Events are embraced by the majority of the community, which may temper concerns on impacts.

Weaknesses

- Overcrowding reported in parks, beaches and Downtown Lake Cowichan during events at the Laketown Ranch.
- Concerns regarding behaviour and noise from festival attendees.
- Ability for local emergency services to respond, especially in the event of unforeseen incidents such as forest fires.
- Attendees unaware of other offerings in the region, such as lake access and local businesses in downtown.

Opportunities

- Continued growth of Laketown Ranch means potential for larger events and visitors to the community.
- Engaged owners of Laketown Ranch and community support for the operation.
- Existing partnerships between stakeholders, such as the Regional District and Town allow for further development of Laketown Ranch.
- Community supports the efforts of Laketown Ranch and further development of it.

Constraints

- Seasonal nature of music festivals may not allow for events in the winter.
- While embraced by the community, events larger than the ones currently on offer may not be supported by the community.
- Financial resources in order to further develop experiences as well as mitigate concerns may not be present.
CURRENT CONDITIONS
EVENTS AND FESTIVALS—SMALL SCALE

**Strengths**
- Events, such as the Honeymoon Bay Farmers Market, have established a niche within the Cowichan Valley.
- Smaller scale events foster civic pride in the region, and act as draws for residents in the greater Cowichan Valley.
- Many different spaces and venues exist throughout the area, making prime spaces to run smaller events.

**Weaknesses**
- Volunteer burnout and shrinking volunteer base makes event planning challenging.
- Events, such as markets have trouble gaining traction due to perceived distance to the rest of the Cowichan Valley.
- Limited funding for events may hold back their growth.

**Opportunities**
- Engaged community organizers who want to support and grow smaller, community scale events.
- Potential for partnerships with other organizations within the area to develop smaller scale events.
- Further development of natural features and recreation opportunities may provide for new experiences and events to be founded.

**Constraints**
- Funding for smaller events may be hard to come by.
- Volunteer burnout may lead to a less of a desire to try new events.
- Events that are well established elsewhere in the Cowichan Valley may provide competition and less incentive to further creation of events in the area.
Large and small scale events are a major part of life for both tourists and residents of the Cowichan Lake Region.

The following may want to be considered:

- Utilize existing workgroups, such as LIFT, or create new groups to work with Laketown Ranch to grow its offerings and mitigate impacts to the community.
- Develop emergency response agreements or plans for the region in the event of an incident during larger events such as those held at Laketown Ranch.
- Develop awareness campaigns and continue to have a presence at Laketown Ranch to drive traffic to other opportunities, services and events elsewhere in the region.
- Consider working with other stakeholders in the region to provide funding or support for smaller scale events year round.
- Identify and enable smaller venues as potential opportunities for future smaller scale events.

Community planners working with these styles of events should also keep in mind the following:

- Large scale events bring with them concerns and issues that may need to be mitigated.
- Parks and other facilities may be used for smaller scale events, potentially requiring facilities in order to make them viable.
- Development of partnerships with like minded organizations is crucial to small event success.
ACCOMMODATIONS
**CURRENT CONDITIONS**

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

**Strengths**
- Full variety of accommodation options within the region.
- Hotels in the region have recently been updated, acting as a point of pride.
- Campgrounds with full servicing allow for visits from all types of campers.
- Short Term Rentals, such as Airbnb, operate within the area, which can provide unique accommodation options to visitors.

**Weaknesses**
- Accommodation facilities are at capacity throughout the peak summer months.
- Rooms can be expensive, especially for large sports groups and winter travellers.
- Centralization of accommodations in the Lake Cowichan townsite means limited stock elsewhere in the region.
- No regulation for Short Term Rentals in either the Town of Lake Cowichan or the Electoral areas, potentially causing detrimental community impacts.

**Opportunities**
- Further accommodation development is supported by many different stakeholders.
- Multiple OCP’s for the region support further hotel and accommodation developments.
- Multiple Provincial parks in the area provide opportunities to expand camping grounds.
- Ditidaht Nation and Ts’uubaa-asatx Nation have expressed interest in developing accommodations such as campsites.

**Constraints**
- Seasonal nature of tourism in the Cowichan Lake area makes it challenging to operate winter accommodations.
- Proximity to larger centres in the Cowichan Valley may limit hotel developments.
- Full sized accommodations may not scale well to the needs of Cowichan Lake.
- Reluctance of larger chains to consider the region due to population catchment area and seasonality.
RECOMMENDATIONS

ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations in the area were identified as one of the most challenging parts of tourism in the region. The following recommendations may help alleviate these challenges.

- Consider attracting an appropriately scaled hotel and accommodation provider.
- Consider the development of a harmonized Short Term Rental bylaw between the Town of Lake Cowichan and the CVRD in order to manage community impact and increase revenue.
- Investigate the conduction of a feasibility study for a larger scale hotel development, i.e. a resort for properties such as the old Youbou or Honeymoon Bay sites, to both act as attraction and accommodation provider.
- Consider working with Indigenous communities, such as Ts’uubaa-asatx and the Ditidaht for accommodations options.

Planners considering the role of Accommodations in a community should keep the following in mind:

- Hotels and accommodation options can be one of the major constraints to the further development of a tourism industry in a community.
- Consideration of accommodation options should be prioritized within documents in communities growing its tourism sector.
- Short term rentals are a growing factor in communities, and will need to be accounted for.
CURRENT CONDITIONS
ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

**Strengths**
- Provincial Highway #18 offers a safe, fast road link to the Trans Canada Highway at Duncan, as well as the Pacific Marine Route providing connections to Victoria via Port Renfrew and Highway #14.
- Trans Canada Trail provides a direct, protected cycling route to the Region.
- BC Transit provides scheduled transit service 7 days a week to Lake Cowichan, and on demand transit to Honeymoon Bay / Youbou 5 days a week.
- Logging roads offer informal links to Port Alberni / Banfield and Nitinat Lake.

**Weaknesses**
- Highway #18 and Pacific Marine Road can be dangerous at night due to animals on the roadway, as well as treacherous in the winter.
- BC Transit service is very limited to outlying areas such as Youbou and Honeymoon Bay, as well as limited to a few runs to Duncan on weekends.
- No private scheduled transportation operators serve the Cowichan Lake region.
- Logging roads are rough and in some cases private access, making connections to Nitinat / Port Alberni / Banfield unreliable.

**Opportunities**
- Existing BC Transit infrastructure in the region makes improvements easier to do.
- Potential for partnerships with Ditidaht Nation to improve road access to Nitinat Lake.
- Logging roads can potentially be upgraded to provide new connections to the region and other destinations such as Banfield and Port Alberni.
- Potential for air service in the form of floatplane travel to the lake.

**Constraints**
- Highway development is the responsibility of the Provincial Government, meaning priorities may not lie within the Cowichan Lake Region.
- Budget constraints from the CVRD may make further transit service to the region unviable.
- Private logging roads are still needed for forestry operations, which may not be compatible with further tourism development.
- Distance from Highway #1 may dissuade visitors due to perceived distance.
RECOMMENDATIONS
ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Getting people to and from a destination is crucial. Despite the perceived distance, the Cowichan Lake region can overcome these issues with the following:

- Petition the Provincial government to further develop logging roads that connect Ditidaht Nation and Cowichan Lake.
- Petition private land owners and forestry companies to improve access on logging roads that connect Nanaimo / Port Alberni for a unique access route.
- Consider increased frequency on BC Transit services to Cowichan Lake in the summer months, as well as to Youbou / Honeymoon Bay.
- Develop floatplane facilities in Cowichan Lake to potentially attract floatplane operators.
- Work with Laketown Ranch to consider implementing private transport operations from larger centres during event weekends.

Planning can help facilitate these new connections, by keeping in mind the following items:

- Road access is important to the development of tourism, and liaising with the Ministry of Transportation is crucial.
- Transportation access also plays a role in improving the lives of residents already living within the community, having benefits to quality of life and other instances of economic development.
- Distance to and from a location can have a major impact on the success of a plan or industry.
CURRENT CONDITIONS
WAYFINDING AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Strengths
- Vast region, with multiple nodes offering unique opportunities.
- Community members are generally welcoming and appreciate tourism business.
- Recently installed signage in Lake Cowichan’s downtown provides clear, concise directions to that communities major destinations.
- Navigation to other nodes such as Youbou and Honeymoon Bay is clear due to one route to each destination.

Weaknesses
- Signage throughout the region is inconsistent due to multiple jurisdictions.
- Limited signage leads to confusion from visitors, causing consternation between visitors and residents.
- Peak summer months see Downtown Lake Cowichan at capacity, leading to potential friction with local residents.
- Community members in outlying areas as well as along the Cowichan River expressed concerns about tourist impacts on the enjoyment of their area.

Opportunities
- Improved signage could direct visitors to other parts of the region, spreading crowds out over different areas.
- LIFT could provide an avenue to address wayfinding / community impact region wide.
- Engaged community members seek to mitigate tourism impacts as opposed to block tourism completely.
- Potential for partnerships with tourism operators to give back to the community.

Constraints
- Highway based signage is controlled by the Ministry of Transport, making change to these signs challenging;
- Funding for improved signage may be a challenge due to multiple jurisdictions and budget constraints.
- Some community members may simply not be open to visitors using amenities such as rivers and the lake, making mitigation attempts challenging.
- Visitors may want to stick close towards the townsite, despite good wayfinding.
RECOMMENDATIONS
WAYFINDING AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

Consideration of wayfinding and community impact is important to further tourism development.

The region may want to consider the following:

- Consider working with stakeholders, such as the CVRD, BC Parks and Town of Lake Cowichan to create a universal signage standard for wayfinding in the region.
- Consider improving signage to public lake accesses in outlying areas in order to direct visitors to lake access that may not be obvious.
- Ensure that signage within the communities and nodes is clear and easy to understand for vehicle users, cyclists and pedestrians.
- Engage with community members during peak season to gauge state of community impact resulting from tourism operations.
- Work with tourism operators, such as tubing companies and Laketown Ranch to help manage impacts to the community caused by those operations.

Community planners working with these styles of events should also keep in mind the following:

- Wayfinding can be a crucial part of the success of a tourism destination, and special attention should be paid to its provisioning.
- Improving signage to mark opportunities and amenities can improve tourists and residents perceptions of a community, and improve both groups experiences.
- Tourism can have negative impacts upon the average residents daily life, and while developments will improve the experience of both.
CONCLUSION
SUMMARY

The recommendations made throughout this booklet were generated as a result of the process of research over the year I worked on this major project. They were created after multiple interviews with residents and officials who call the Cowichan Lake area home. They were designed to consider what resources, opportunities and plans are already in existence within the region, and were based on literature which was reviewed as part of the main document completed for the major project.

This project uncovered many different aspects of tourism development in rural areas, and how community planners will play a role in the development of an industry. Primarily, planners will focus on capacity building by bringing stakeholders together as well as practical tasks such as policy development.

Areas such as the Cowichan Lake region may have limited resources, but many different levels of stakeholders and interested parties. Despite the limited resources, collaboration can help a region overcome the financial shortcomings.

While collaboration between stakeholders within the region was emphasised frequently in the project, the region will need to work with external stakeholders, such as the province to develop opportunities such as road access.
CONCLUSION

The development of this project provided insight into the development of tourism and alternate industries within the context of Vancouver Island. With the state of the forestry industry on the island being in flux, communities who have been based in resources will want to consider diversification to avoid downturn which will have a major impact on the community.

The project demonstrated that communities such as the Cowichan Lake Region have many different considerations when developing a tourism industry, and that it is impossible to take a solution that worked for one area and deploy it in another. However, it is for this reason that it may be a challenge for smaller communities to create a tourism industry due to limited resources allowing for a custom tourism strategy.

It is my hope that the work and research that I conducted within the region can serve stakeholders within the Cowichan Lake region to help mitigate the challenges that they may face with a growing tourism industry, in order to create a product and destination that serves as a premier destination on Vancouver Island, and becomes a source of pride for the entire region.

This booklet is designed to have brought those findings generated in the thesis into an approachable and easy to read format. The entirety of the findings are found within the thesis itself, which can be found at the Vancouver Island University Library.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the many people that I interviewed with throughout the year I undertook this research. Everyone interviewed for this project was passionate about their community and the topic, which made this project very enjoyable.

I would also like to thank the people of the Cowichan Lake Region, who came to my events or provided me with words of encouragement as I spoke to them during my many visits to the area.

All photos within this document are my original work.

Icons used in the project are from Project Noun. https://thenounproject.com/
Appendix B.

Recruitment Email

Good Afternoon ____________.

My name is Seamus McConville, and I am a Master of Community Planning student at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo. I am writing to you today about my major project which I am conducting as part of my master’s requirement. This thesis looks at the role of planning in developing a tourism industry in municipalities on Vancouver Island, with a specific focus on Lake Cowichan. I am looking to recruit stakeholders who would have a role in developing a tourism industry in the Lake Cowichan area to participate in a face to face, semi structured interview, lasting 45 minutes to an hour. The conversation will focus on topics of stakeholder networking, tourism in the community, as well as strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to developing a tourism industry in the community.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can withdraw your consent to participation at any point during the study within reason, for any reason. You will have the ability to approve a final transcript of the interview, of which will help guide the writing of the thesis. You will not be directly quoted in any materials that are produced. If you choose to withdraw, all data you have provided will be withdrawn and destroyed. All transcripts will be destroyed after the completion of the project. The final product of the project will provide the Lake Cowichan region with best practices and guidelines to further develop their tourism industry.

If you have any further questions or would like to participate in this study, please respond to this email. If you would not like to take part, please respond with a message of decline.

Thank you for your time,

Seamus McConville
Student,
Master of Community Planning
Vancouver Island University
Appendix C.

Consent Letter
Touring for the Top: Developing a Tourism Plan for Lake Cowichan

Principal Investigator
Seamus McConville, Student.
Master of Community Planning
Vancouver Island University
seamuspmc@gmail.com

Student Supervisor
Graham Sakaki, MCP
Department of Social Sciences
Vancouver Island University
Graham.Sakaki@viu.ca

Purpose
I am a student in the Master of Community Planning at Vancouver Island University. My project, entitled Touring for the Top: Developing a Tourism Plan for Lake Cowichan, is designed to understand how communities can develop a tourism policy from a planning perspective. The results of the data and research will produce data which then can be implemented by Lake Cowichan to grow their tourism industry.

Description
Research participants will be asked questions on their thoughts about tourism in the community, and how it can be developed further. Participants will be asked about efforts which have existed to develop tourism beforehand, what opportunities and threats exist in developing an industry as well as identifying potential stakeholder networks. Participation is completely voluntary and will require 45 minutes of the subject’s time.

Risk of Harm to Participants.
There is a low risk to the participant. The information that is provided will be stripped of any identifiable data and a pseudonym will be created. An index will be created of pseudonyms which will only be visible to the researcher and supervisor. This index will be destroyed upon completion of the project.

There is a risk of a loss of privacy, reputation and professional or employment opportunities with this project, in the event that the identity of the subject is discovered within the community.

There is a risk of harm to the greater community, other institutions institution and groups. While the names of participants will be coded, there can be the risk of harm to existing partnerships and networks if the participant is identified within the community, and if someone in the community is able to draw conclusions between stakeholders based on what was said.

Management of Research Data and Storage.
If you choose to participate, all records or your participation will be confidential. Only my supervisor and I will have access to information in which you are directly identified. With permission, I will record and transcribe the interview. I will provide you a copy with the transcription within a week of the interview, with an opportunity for editing and clarification from yourself.
The data and consent forms will be stored securely at my home. The transcriptions will be stored and backed up on a hard drive, as well as on an off-site computer within British Columbia. These files will be password protected, with myself and the supervisor having access to the password. Consent forms will be secured in a locked filing cabinet. Upon completion of the project, the data and consent forms will be destroyed. This will happen on or around June 1st, 2020.

Correspondence and recruitment for this project is being conducted using a Gmail account, with its servers based in the United States. This means that data transmitted over email could be subject to the United States PATRIOT Act.

Use of Data
The results will be published as part of my master’s major project, which will be available for viewing on VIULearn, VIU’s online academic repository. Data will also form a booklet which can be used by the municipality to grow their tourism industry.

Participation and Consent.
Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any point during the interview and transcription editing process. You will be provided with the interview transcription to redact and clarify and may terminate your consent at any time during this process. You have a week after the final transcription is approved by yourself to revoke your consent.

Consent and Conditions of Consent.
I have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to participate in this research under the following conditions:

I consent to the interview being audio recorded. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Participant Name ________________________ Participant Signature ________________________

Commitment of Principle Investigator.
I, Seamus McConville, promise to adhere to the procedures described in this consent form.

Principal Investigator Signature ________________________ Date ____________

Ethical Concerns
If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Participants should be provided a copy of the signed consent form.
Appendix D.
Interview Questionnaire
**Interview Questions**

**Introduction**

1. Please provide a brief description of your background in the community.

**Tourism / Economic Resiliency**

1. Do you feel that tourism is important to the community? If so, why?

2. Has your community experienced downturns which have impacted its economic wellbeing? If so, has this inspired the development of alternate industries?

3. What experience do you have with tourism development and management?
   a. What has the experience been like in the development of tourism in the community from your personal experience?

**Strengths and Opportunities**

1. What are some opportunities in the community, both natural and human, that can be developed in order to develop the tourism industry?
   i. Have any of these been attempted before? Why or why not?

   ii. If they have, what was the result?

**Weaknesses and Constraints**

1. If any, what are some weaknesses and threats to the development of a tourism industry in the community? Could they be mitigated?

**Stakeholder Networking**

1. Throughout your experiences in tourism in the community, have there been times where you sought out other like minded stakeholders? Why or Why not, and Describe the experience.

2. Are there any challenges with working with stakeholders? Weaknesses?

3. Is there a challenge with developing buy-in from other stakeholders?

**Other**

1. Are there any final comments towards the subject?
Appendix E.

Outreach Boards
Have Your Say!
Welcome!

I am conducting a public outreach session in order to create a tourism development plan for Lake Cowichan to complete my Master of Community Planning at Vancouver Island University in Nanaimo.

The information that you provide will help me provide recommendations for local stakeholders to act upon in order to develop the tourism industry in the community.

By participating in this exercise, you accept that the data you place upon the boards will be factored into my recommendations and Masters Thesis. Your identity will be completely anonymous. Please refrain from putting any identifying data on your contributions.

Post It Planning!
Grab a post it note and answer any (or all!) of the four questions. Kindly write the question number on your post it!

1. What are some things with the community itself that you are most proud about?
2. Do you think that Lake Cowichan is a good fit for a healthy tourism industry?
3. What are some challenges or risks that may appear if tourism is further developed in Lake Cowichan?
4. Why should or shouldn’t Lake Cowichan develop tourism?
Have Your Say!
Regional Reasons

Place a dot sticker on the reason you think someone would come visit the area, Or if you are visiting, what drew you here?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities centered around the lake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate, spiritual and personal retreats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities, such as hiking and camping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private cabin rentals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and wine tour opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenic detour while driving along the island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopover while driving the Pacific Marine Circle Route.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no reason.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Please leave a Post It note!)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Favourite Spaces - Lake Cowichan

Place a sticker on this map of the community that you feel is a good place for recreation or a great experience for tourists that could use further development!
Appendix F.

Survey for Cowichan Lake Visitor Centre.
Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce: Visitor Impact Survey

Purpose
This survey was created as part of a Master of Community Planning Major Project at Vancouver Island University, which focussed on tourism within the Cowichan Lake region. The aim of this survey is to assist the Cowichan Lake Visitors Centre in gauging perceptions of tourism within their community and build upon the findings of that master’s project.

Section 1: Demographic Information
What area most closely identifies where you currently reside? (Choose any one option)
- Town of Lake Cowichan
- Skutz Falls
- Mesachie Lake
- Meade Creek
- Honeymoon Bay
- Youbou
- Lake Cowichan First Nation
- Ditidat Nation
- Caycuse
- Greater Cowichan Valley

What is your age range? (Choose any one option)
- Under 18 years old
- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65+ years old
- Prefer not to say

Please describe your relationship to Cowichan Lake Area: (Choose all that apply)
- I own a home in the area.
- I rent a home in the area.
- I run / own a business in the area.
- I commute to work in the area.
- I am a seasonal resident of the area.

Section 2: Tourism Growth
This section is designed to gauge, from a resident’s perspective how the Cowichan Lake should consider developing its tourism industry, based on some of the recommendations found in the master’s thesis.

1. Of the following prompts, please indicate which one you believe is a primary draw to the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Visit</th>
<th>Yes, it is a primary draw</th>
<th>It is not a primary draw</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lake and river-based activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Scale Events (Laketown Ranch, sports tournaments).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small scale events (farmers markets).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities (hiking, cycling, mountain biking, camping).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retreat Activities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Of the following action items, which do you feel should be prioritized if Cowichan Lake were to develop further tourism opportunities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No Response / Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop further water access points along the lake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade existing water access points within CVRD / Town jurisdiction to provide further amenities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with groups such as Mosaic to create further wildland hiking and mountain biking access.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create partnerships to develop further accommodation opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work from a Cowichan Valley Wide perspective to develop further smaller scale events, such as farmers markets.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage the Provincial Government to develop improved road access from Lake Cowichan to Ditidat / Bamfield to encourage further tourism traffic.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Of the following statements, which are the ones you appreciate when considering tourism development? Select all that apply.

- Boost to the local economy.
- Offers experiences that may encourage a visitor to return as a resident.
- Offers opportunities for the area to grow.
- Provides vitality to the community.
- New faces in the community to engage with.
- Other (Describe Below)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. Do you have any other thoughts towards tourism in the region?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section 3: Managing Tourism

This section is designed to gauge the state of tourism from a resident’s perspective, in order to understand priorities of mitigation and addressing issues that may arise over peak season.

1. Of the following main nodes, which areas do you feel experience overcrowding during peak season? Check all that apply.

- Uptown Lake Cowichan
- Youbou core
- Downtown Lake Cowichan
- Honeymoon Bay core
- Other (please explain)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
2. Please indicate your affinity for the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure / Unknown / No Response.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism traffic diminishes my ability to enjoy the region.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding in areas of the region due to tourism does not allow me to undertake my daily tasks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors are not respectful of their surroundings, with tourism operations negatively impacting their surroundings (environmentally and socially).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A continued growth in tourism without mitigation would lead to me not supporting further tourism ventures.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. The master’s thesis discussed concerns that community members have around tourism development, as well as suggested recommendations to help mitigate those concerns. Considering the previous responses, state which of the following mitigation tactics would potentially address some of those concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Less Urgent</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better wayfinding to other, less prominent public beaches / trails to take pressure off main destinations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with tourism operators (cycle rental/ tubing rental) to mitigate their guest’s impacts on the region.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop, funding dependant, crowd management and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic studies on main node areas (Youbou / Downtown Lake Cowichan / Honeymoon Bay).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with large events held at Laketown Ranch to implement shuttle services to downtown / outside of the area to mitigate traffic during peak events.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that future tourism development considers the impacts of climate change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. If mitigation efforts were to take place, would you support further tourism development?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Unknown / Unsure / No Response

5. Do you have anything else you would like to share about mitigating tourism impact?

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time! The data collected will help guide the chamber around ideas of tourism development in order to ensure a sustainable balance for both tourist and residents alike.
Cowichan Lake Chamber of Commerce: Visitor Experience Survey

Purpose
This survey was created as part of a Master of Community Planning Major Project at Vancouver Island University, which focussed on tourism within the Cowichan Lake region. The aim of this survey is to assist the Cowichan Lake Visitors Centre in gauging perceptions of tourism from visitors of their community in order to assess future development priorities.

Section One: Demographics

1. Where are you visiting from?
   □ Greater Cowichan Valley
   □ Mid Vancouver Island
   □ Lower Mainland BC
   □ Rest of Canada
   □ Europe
   □ Australia
   □ Southern Vancouver Island
   □ North Vancouver Island
   □ Rest of British Columbia
   □ United States
   □ Asia
   □ Central / South America

2. What is your age range? (Choose any one option)
   □ Under 18 years old
   □ 18-24 years old
   □ 25-34 years old
   □ 35-44 years old
   □ 45-54 years old
   □ 55-64 years old
   □ 65+ years old
   □ Prefer not to say

3. How long are you visiting the region for?
   □ Day Trip
   □ 1-3 Days
   □ 3-7 Days
   □ 7-14 Days
   □ 14-30 Days
   □ 30+ Days

Section Two: Visitor Experience

1. What was the reason for your visit to the Cowichan Lake Region (Select all that apply).
   □ Travelling the Pacific Marine Route
   □ Tubing / other water-based activities
   □ Hiking / Cycling / Mountain Biking
   □ Camping
   □ Events at Laketown Ranch
   □ Smaller local events
   □ Sporting Events
   □ Food / Drink opportunities (Winery Tours)
   □ Personal / Corporate Retreat
   □ Other
2. Please state your affinity for the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>No response/Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Cowichan Lake region was easy to navigate, with opportunities such as hiking and water access easy to find.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cowichan Lake Region was able to meet my needs for food, shopping and accommodation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities, such as beaches, restaurants and cafes were easily accessible throughout the region (outside Lake Cowichan townsite).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cowichan Lake region had the events or experiences I was looking to partake in.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Did you experience any challenges with the region (Navigation, lack of services, hard to access areas) during your visit?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
4. Was there a memorable experience during your visit? If so, what was it?


Section 3: Further Development

5. Based on your experiences within the Cowichan Lake region, which of the following prompts would you prioritize to make your experience a better one?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>Less Important Focus</th>
<th>No Response / Not Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create wayfinding signage to other opportunities in the outlying areas of Cowichan Lake (Youbou / Honeymoon Bay).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop new vehicle routes to areas further outside of the Cowichan Lake Region (Nitinat / Bamfield).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct new natural amenities, such as water accesses and hiking trails.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrade existing water accesses with updated amenities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage further development of accommodations around Cowichan Lake (traditional hotels – campgrounds).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage a greater diversity of cultural events within the area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. During your visit, did you feel that there were any underdeveloped experiences that if developed would improve your experience? Please explain.

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

7. As a result of your experience, would you consider coming back for another visit?
   □ Yes             □ No             □ Unknown / Unsure

8. As a result of your experience, would you consider returning as a resident or business owner at some point in the future?
   □ Yes             □ No             □ Unknown / Unsure

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your time in Cowichan Lake?

........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Thank you for your time! The data collected will help guide the chamber around ideas of tourism development in order to ensure a sustainable balance for both tourist and residents alike.