Authenticity in Cultural Tourism and Aboriginal Empowerment in Northern Canada

Suzanne de la Barre

Introduction
Since MacCannell (1973) introduced the concept of “authenticity” in tourism, it has had a tremendous effect on tourism research (Wang, 2000; Zorilla, 1999). Tourism researchers have struggled with the issues raised by authenticity, especially within cultural tourism and for Aboriginal cultural groups implicated in tourism. Given the ambiguity and limitations for how “authenticity” can be understood and applied, some critics have for a long time now debated its usefulness in the study of tourism phenomena (Urry, 1991). Wang (2000), however, suggests that “authenticity” remains relevant to certain types of tourism, especially cultural and ethnic tourism. More specifically, Wang claims that the search for “objective authenticity” or “object-related authenticity” remains key to understanding tourist expectations of cultural and ethnic tourism (p. 49). “Objective authenticity” is that which refers to the authenticity of originals, and when applied to the products of tourism refers to traditional culture and origin, along with a sense of the genuine, the “real” and the unique (Wang, 2000).

With the emergence of cultural tourism as a growing and powerful niche market sector of tourism, the authenticity debate has led some researchers to assess its relationship to cultural, social and economic empowerment (McIntosh, Hinch, & Ingram, 2002). Significant discussions on how to favour empowerment processes in cultural tourism have been had by both scholars and concerned stakeholders – for instance Aboriginal groups, communities and associations. This paper will identify some of the tourism development tools that can assist with empowering those who have the most at stake when developing cultural tourism activities: they are the Aboriginal communities whose day to day lives are immersed in the cultures from wherein cultural tourism typically takes place.

“Authenticity” will be investigated in light of research that contributes to a better understanding for the processes involved in the empowerment of marginalized cultural groups and communities that are involved in cultural tourism. It will entail an assessment for how different approaches to tourism development impact upon the construction and use of “authentic” in cultural tourism, and the cultural empowerment of Aboriginal groups. Two tourism development strategies will be examined in light of authenticity debates. They will highlight potential relationships to cultural empowerment. The strategies are
community-based tourism (tourism that is led by the community and whose benefits are also for the community), and sustainable tourism development.

This study is divided into four sections: First, an outline of some of the issues associated with authenticity and its definition will be presented. An examination of some of the characteristics of community-based tourism and sustainable tourism development will follow. The latter will highlight the relationships between development approach, the nature of “authenticity,” and socio-cultural empowerment. The third section proposes a framework that emerges from a comparative examination of two Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives, and their impacts on the Aboriginal communities involved: Nunavut, Canada, and Hainan Island, China. The comparative approach enables a tentative framework that identifies several characteristics that may facilitate cultural empowerment objectives in cultural tourism. Finally, the framework is used to examine some of the issues presented through an analysis of two emerging Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives in northern Canada.

**Conceptualizing Authenticity: Authenticity as Destructive**

Like Wang (2000), Taylor (2001) links authenticity in tourism to the original of an historical past. He states, “within cultural tourism, and wherever else the production of authenticity is dependent on some act of (re)production, it is conventionally the past which is seen to hold the model of the original” (Taylor, 2001, p. 9). This idea of authenticity invokes MacCannell’s (1999) earlier discussions on “truth,” “reality,” and the experience of “Other” in the context of understanding tourists and modernity.

With a view of authentic as an original state, and by extension, as a “non-renewable resource,” the discourse of cultural tourism is one that infers a need for culture to be protected from change and transformation: the object as original truth, its “primitive,” pure and untouched condition, must always remain the same, fossilized in time, and available for consumption in its permanently initial form. When conceptualized for tourism, authenticity attracts “truth seekers”: tourists who are interested in other people’s “authentic” lives, and who find comfort in the idea of a past that reflects simpler times, and reassurance (if not relief) when they discover that it still exists in the same way it always has. As Taylor (2001) puts it “authenticity has become the philosopher’s stone for an industry that generally seeks to procure other peoples’ ‘realities’” (p. 8). Indeed, the “experience of authentic” could be said to temporarily redress “a perceived death in the Western psyche which has abandoned its authenticity in the quest of progress and technology, and has thus become enmeshed in the rigors of time” (Taylor, 2001, p. 10). Here, Taylor suggests, authenticity finds its corollary in the “tragic” experience of modernity (p. 10).

Elsewhere, Greenwood (1977) has argued that authenticity as it is applied to cultural tourism is largely a marketing tool: its primary “raison d’être” is to attract consumers through a promise to satisfy their need for what is “real.” His much referred to Spanish Basque case study, *Culture by the Pound*, sought to demonstrate how tourism-marketing processes manipulate and promote
authenticity to the detriment of those who gain cultural purpose and meaning from it. A decade later, Cohen (1988) reiterated Greenwood’s findings and stated that the commodification of culture for tourism was capable of detrimentally transforming cultural meaning for those who practice and find meaning in it.

Despite the dangers associated with using authenticity for tourism described by MacCannell (1974, 1999), Cohen (1988) and Greenwood (1977), other scholars propose alternative outcomes. Taylor (2001), for instance, claims that the production of culture for tourism entails a twofold purpose that always results in more than it being positioned exclusively as a commodity. He proposes that cultural production processes can have purposes that are not just for tourism: they can also accommodate the non-tourism related needs of the people immersed in the culture. Similarly, Moulin (1990) proposes that by “keeping the focus on the culture, the identity and the values of the past,” authenticity can be used to predispose a community to explore how the authentic can be “a positive and dynamic force to understand the present and to foresee the future” (p. 26). Far from fixing culture, he claims it is possible for cultural tourism activities to provide an “opportunity for change in an evolutionary manner” (p. 26). This can be accomplished by avoiding the danger of “falling into a touristic logic rather than a culture logic” (Moulin, 1990, p. 14). Moulin is referring to the possibility of prioritizing the needs of a culture above the needs of tourism. The needs of tourism referred to are, for instance, pleasing the tourist, prioritizing market-driven and industry factors, and planning strictly for economic benefits and private sector interests (possibly foreign or not local). “Culture logic” thus implies, for example that cultural tourism be given preferential treatment as an opportunity to care for the past, for history, and for heritage and that it not be used just as a vehicle for economic development. “Culture logic” requires that we examine community and cultural empowerment in relation to how authenticity can be conceptualized and used in cultural tourism.

**Conceptualizing Authenticity: Authenticity as Empowerment**

While authenticity as a marketing construct has for the most part been formulated by “outside” actors, it is increasingly seen as important that the interpretive power to define and represent it shift to those on the “inside” (Milne, Grekin, & Woodley, 1998). “Outside” actors include external agents who have the power to define place ideas and represent cultures with the goal of motivating tourists to consume a place (e.g., government tourism bodies and marketing agents). In turn, “outside” actors also include the tourists who internalize the idea of place being represented to them and seek it out. “Inside” actors on the other hand, include members of the community and other stakeholders (tourism related and/or not) who will be impacted by tourism,
including members of the cultural groups whose cultures will be showcased as tourism “products.”

With a shift to “inside” interpretive actors, authenticity, through cultural tourism, can become part of a process that gives communities the opportunity to contemplate who they are and how they want to present themselves to the world. It also provides them an opportunity to deepen their self-knowledge and assess what is the most beneficial type of cultural tourism appropriate for them. In addition, this process can enable “inside” tourism planners to also consider the type and quantity of tourists they want to attract (McIntosh, Hinch, & Ingram, 2002).

A community process that is founded on the mobilization of its members provides an opportunity for cultural groups to assess their heritage and history in relation to their own contemporary and forward-looking ideas on who they are (Derrett, 1996). As well, it impacts upon their choices and decisions on how they want to be portrayed for tourism purposes. What “inside” control allows for is the idea that heritage is a living tool and comprises, as Moulin (1990) claims, a generation’s “past handed down by ancestors, as well as the present generation’s own legacy to the next generation to follow” (p. 22). Cultural tourism becomes a “renewable resource”: alive and transformed by the day-to-day lives of those who live and (re)create their place identity through (or at least “alongside”) cultural tourism.

Taylor (2001) proposes the idea of “sincerity” in tourism as an alternative to the quest for the “authentic.” “Sincere” cultural tourism is based on an interactive approach and cross-cultural encounters entail communicating with localized culture (Taylor, 2001, p.16). For Taylor, the idea of “authentic” is a colonial remnant that embodies a legacy of political and economic domination, and is accompanied by the creation of myths, stereotypes, and fantasies that shapes the West’s views of others. Furthermore, he claims “in sincere cultural experiences, where tourists and ‘actors’ ‘meet half way,’ authenticity may be redefined in terms of local values” (p. 24). Thus, for Taylor, rather than the authentic object as the perceived valuable site in the touristic experience, it is the moment of interaction that is perceived to hold value.

Taylor (2001) suggests that externally controlled and directed tourism initiatives may be pre-disposed to create what MacCannell (1973) termed “staged” authenticity in tourism. Staged authenticity, Taylor (2001) argues, re/produces myths of “Other” as valuable and reaffirms colonial legacies. Alternatively, locally controlled and directed tourism initiatives may be pre-

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1 The tourism industry, in Canada at least, commonly uses the term “product” for tourism activities and events.

2 The “Other” is characterized by essentialized objectifications of those not “I” (the self, or one’s perceived community, i.e. nationality). The “Other” in tourism is characterized by hegemonic colonial perspectives, the privileged and “knowing” observer, and is linked to “museumifying” the cultures of Other (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). See also Aitchison, 2000.
disposed to create "sincere" interactions between hosts and guests. Sincere interactions are valuable and considerate of local values.

Some New Zealand Maori, for instance, have taken matters into their own hands and juxtaposed their version of Aboriginal tourism experiences with the staged "authenticity" tours available through non-Aboriginal tourism operators. They report tourist experiences that provide them with an opportunity to "sincerely communicate" who they believe themselves to be (Taylor, 2001). Nuttall's (1997) work in Alaska also builds on this idea. He proposes, "communities are not always passive but often seize upon tourism as a means of communication to display their existence and to establish their own power" (p. 224). Furthermore, he claims that through this communication process "communities can use tourism to develop strategies for self-determination and cultural survival" (p. 224). Others propose that inside actors are duty bound even to their heritage and point to the crucial choices only they can make. Rivard (1977) claims, "the people who possess knowledge that relates closely or remotely to the collective memory and heritage have a duty not only to be its official researchers but also to disseminate and use it" (cited in Moulin, 1990, p. 23).

Duty may not be the most fitting means to an end. Nonetheless, notions of cultural tourism development that speak to duty or empowerment refer to the detrimental nature of choices that need to be made. These choices also require that significant questions be asked. Perhaps one of the most important is: "How do inside agents activate, or even participate, in processes where empowerment and 'insider' choices can be realized?" The next two sections describe tourism development strategies that provide some indication as to how these processes might be facilitated.

Tools for Empowerment: Community-based Tourism Development

The roots to community-based tourism are found in "grassroots" approaches to development and gained an important place in community development movements during the 1970's and 1980's (Christenson, Fendley, & Robinson, 1994). This period of time is defined by an emerging critical understanding for power as a dynamic force in relationships (between people, within communities, etc.) and led to the development of strategies that empowered local agents, for instance, through participatory methodologies. It also led to approaches that engaged collaboration with different levels of government and decision-makers. These collaborations are sometimes characterized by the support offered by government agencies, for instance, through financial assistance to help create insider controlled development plans. This is in direct

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3 Participatory methodologies are based on adult education approaches and grounded in democratic principles such as process-oriented and consensus-based decision-making (Kruger & Sturtevant, 2003). For an example of how participatory tools can be used in a community tourism planning process, see Derrett, 1996.
opposition to “support” in the form of imposing ready-made externally controlled development plans. The latter is a most obvious remnant of colonial models for development assistance and has been widely criticized over the last thirty years (Chambers, 1997).

The above-mentioned conceptual and methodological changes are not without their challenges (Mohan & Stokke, 2000; Reed, 1997). Nonetheless, they represent a marked shift from traditional development strategies. Christenson, Fendley, and Robinson (1994) explain that collaboration in community development provided government “with a rationale for working in partnership with community leaders and citizens to solve local problems” (p.4). More importantly perhaps, they claim it also served as “a rationale for individuals to get together and initiate a social action process with or without the help of government” (p.4). It is likely that the potential for the former to be a positive force in community development increased through the existence of the latter.

There are a variety of conceptual and methodological possibilities available for community-based tourism development (Murphy, 1985; Wilkinson, 1994; Richards & Hall, 1997). What almost all of them have in common, however, is a set of principles that are laden with good intentions and idealistic goals – which is not at all to say they are inherently unrealistic. Community development principles include:

- Community ownership
- Utilization of local knowledge and capacity
- Maximizing resources unique to the area
- Decision-making autonomy
- Appropriate and locally identified technical assistance
- Collaboration with private and public institutions in a way that does not undermine local control (Christenson, Fendley, & Robinson, 1994)

While they may not be inherently unrealistic, community-based approaches are susceptible to misuse and are not exempt from complex implementation difficulties (Christenson, Fendley, & Robinson, 1994; France, 1997; Murphy, 1985; Reed, 1997; Richards & Hall, 2000; Wilkinson, 1994). Nonetheless, they offer a theoretical, conceptual and practical basis for considering community-centred and driven tourism development processes. The issues surrounding authenticity in cultural tourism speak to local empowerment and control over tourism processes and the products that are created. Therefore, community-based approaches in tourism planning can be an integral part of how local

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4 Feminist critiques of development were central to the shifts in approaches that have occurred since the 1970’s; see Marchand & Parpart, (2003). It should also be noted that post-structuralist critiques offer “post-development” and “post-colonial” analyses that challenge the value of all development agendas, including participatory ones (see Escobar, 1995, and Watts, 1993). For a discussion on tourism and development – as it relates to “Community Development” – see Hannam, 2002.
communities and vulnerable cultures, such as Aboriginal cultures worldwide, participate in deciding how (if) their culture should be used for tourism purposes.

**Tools for Empowerment: Sustainable Tourism Development**

Debates on what “sustainable” means are numerous (Hall & Lew, 1998; Nelson, Butler & Wall, 1999). Like community-based tourism, the idea of “sustainability” grew out of the conceptual shifts that occurred in development thinking during the 1970’s and 1980’s. More specifically, sustainability grew out of concern over the environment and was prompted by the release of The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) report entitled *Our Common Future* in 1987 (WCED, 1987).\(^5\) The report defined sustainable development as a “process by which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:8). The conceptual and practical implications of this report were framed as principles in *Agenda 21* and the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* a few years later at the 1992 Rio Conference (France, 1997). Despite the difficulties in defining “sustainable tourism,” it is generally understood that it can be perceived as both a set of principles and a “toolbox” of practices.

Even if sustainability as a concept was initially linked to the natural environment, the links to other areas, including community well being (cultural and economic), quickly became apparent. In part, this was due to the growing popularity of “ecotourism,” and to the growing sophistication of tourism impact analyses (Honey, 1999; Wearing & Neil, 2001). The latter included an analysis of tourism’s impacts on communities and revealed how communities were fundamentally implicated at the implementation level of sustainability planning. At the same time, as the popularity of ecotourism increased, environmental sustainability was linked to community involvement. Consequently, it was also linked to political, social and cultural empowerment. Research underlined the interdependence between the “environment” in its widest sense, social communities, and the tourists who visited them. As a result, the link between community and sustainability became fundamental to most models of sustainable tourism, and community involvement in tourism development is now widely considered to be at the centre of the sustainability debate (Richards & Hall, 2000).

The main conceptual foundations or principles of sustainable management as they directly affect cultural tourism include:

- Appropriate policy, planning and management as an essential response to the problems of natural and human resource misuse in tourism
- Not anti-growth but emphasizes limitations on growth
- Long term planning for long term goals

\(^5\) Also known as *The Brundtland Report* named after its chairwoman.

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- Equity and fairness in satisfying human needs and aspirations
- Shared decision-making and focus on information sharing
- The balancing of costs and benefits must extend to considering how these affect what different groups will gain or lose (Richards & Hall, 2000, p. 6)

For sustainable community development to occur, the above principles are integral at all levels and phases of the community development process: issue identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Essentially, sustainability attempts to consider the long-term assets of a community and emphasizes the inherent value found in each community in a holistic and interrelated manner. Like community-based tourism, its ideals are concerned with an equitable distribution of benefits, framed by a shared decision-making processes. It is through these processes that resources are identified and strategies for their use are developed. Fundamentally, it is in this regard that sustainability’s principles and policy orientation affects communities and their cultural tourism resources.

What sustainability achieves, at least conceptually and theoretically, is a means to consider tempering economic goals and concerns with environmental and socio-cultural ones. When applied to tourism development, a concern for sustainability facilitates the idea that tourism is more than just a market driven industry (France, 1997). This can significantly alter how the activities and relationships within tourism are framed: for instance relationships between community members or cultural groups and tourists. Still, despite the perceived benefits of introducing sustainability into development planning, the need to address short-term benefits, goals, and costs poses one of the most detrimental obstacles to the realization of sustainable development. This is especially the case in regions where viable revenue creating alternatives are few and where communities feel a need to embark on short term planning in order to reap immediate results.

In summary, applied to cultural tourism, the idea of “sustainable” requires consideration for how the cultural well being of a community or group can withstand the pressures inflicted upon it by tourism. The framework developed in the following section will help to illustrate how the tools discussed in the last two sections can empower cultural communities in their cultural tourism decision making.

Creating a Framework for Analyzing the Cultural Empowerment Potential of Aboriginal Cultural Tourism

A comparative study of Hainan Island, China, and Canada’s Nunavut Territory is used to develop a framework that examines how approaches to tourism development affect the nature of authenticity and their relationship to cultural empowerment. Hainan Island is located in the South China Sea, China, and is home to three Aboriginal cultures: the Miao, Hui, and the Li. Nunavut is Canada’s newest Territory and is home to the Inuit. The data for both analyses
were collected primarily through previous research (Xie (2003); Milne, Grekin & Woodley, 1998). The data used for Nunavut was supplemented with additional document and tourism website analysis.

Aboriginal tourism in Hainan Island occurs primarily through government supported “folk villages.” Here, tourists can become acquainted with Aboriginal culture through song and dance performances, traditional ceremonies, eat traditional Aboriginal foods, and purchase souvenirs (Xie, 2003). Nunavut promises a place where you, the visitor, can:

Immerse yourself in the history of this land with the help of an Inuit guide, whether it's tales of ancestors who risked their lives in small skin boats hunting whale in ice packed waters, accounts of the Tariassuit (shadow people), or enchanting memories of lives lived in close-knit Inuit communities (www.nunavuttourism.com)

Nunavut offers hunting, fishing, whale watching, kayaking, camping, dog team rides, mountain climbing, berry-picking, and traditional Inuit culture.

The framework proposed in Table 1 provides further elaboration on the tourism initiatives and context for tourism development in both destinations. It suggests a relationship between three main components: 1) the type of approach to tourism development; 2) the level of Aboriginal self-determination and their ownership of the tourism resource; and 3) the impacts on the cultural tourism product (fossilized in a primitive original past, or engaged with the cultural community and dynamic). While highlighting the destination planning process (community-based or outside agent controlled), the framework suggests how the type of development process used influences control over how “authenticity” of the cultural product is constructed, and for what purposes. In so doing, the framework highlights potential empowerment effects on Aboriginal cultural groups.

The framework underlines how fundamental principles and characteristics of community-based tourism development and sustainable tourism are striven for in Nunavut, but not on Hainan Island. As well, it would appear that government support provided through policy and planning mechanisms in Nunavut facilitates self-determination. This support sometimes requires government agencies to mobilize funds and facilitate self-determination processes. For instance, funds might be required to create promotional materials that support how Aboriginal people want to be represented.

The framework presented here cannot lead to any conclusions in terms of what is required to foster a use of “authenticity” in cultural tourism that can empower Aboriginal cultural groups. It does however suggest that empowerment is more likely to occur if tourism development contexts include a capacity for self-determination that is actively supported by governing bodies and other institutions, through policy and other means. Importantly, the different government systems in place in Canada and China appear to have a direct impact on the nature Aboriginal cultural tourism initiatives. From what is
presented in Table 1, it would also appear that community-based tourism development and sustainable tourism development are more likely present where political agendas are at least democratically motivated, if not imperfectly and incompletely initiated or implemented. Government systems and approaches to tourism development seem to have an influence on how authenticity can be conceptualized and used by Aboriginal cultural groups in their tourism development activities (i.e. fossilized for display or dynamic representing present day and self-defined Aboriginal culture). Consequently, they might equally have an impact on whether or not cultural tourism can facilitate cultural empowerment. Moreover, it would also appear that sustainable tourism in the Hainan Island context is affected by the overall approach to tourism development. The strategies used for tourism development identified directly oppose the principles of sustainable tourism, as they are most widely and commonly understood.  

To summarize, the framework identifies at least five characteristics that are required for cultural tourism to foster Aboriginal empowerment. They are: 1) self-government initiatives that devolve rights and responsibilities to Aboriginal groups. These are supported and/or facilitated by previous government structures; 2) a functional and operational level of democratic infrastructure that facilitates consultation and decision-making processes, as well as implementations strategies; 3) the non-Aboriginal government support (economic and other) of tourism initiatives that are geared towards enhancing Aboriginal communities in ways identified by the communities; 4) presence of sustainable development and sustainable tourism principles and guidelines that work in concert with Aboriginal conceptualizations and definitions for “sustainable”; 5) economic development strategies as well as tourism industry recognition for the cultural sensitivity required to promote Aboriginal peoples in ways that are meaningful to them. This often includes some ability for the Aboriginal group to manage or otherwise be involved in the promotional images that are made use of to market Aboriginal cultural tourism products.

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6 While the definition of sustainable tourism itself is subject to cultural bias, it is still useful to consider cultural self-determination as the foundation to realizing sustainability within any cultural context. Hence, even if, for instance, environmental values as they are differently perceived in different cultures can affect definitions of sustainable (Hughes, 1995), “who” is doing the defining remains a very significant part for how/if sustainable development of any kind can be achieved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism Development Approach</th>
<th>Hainan Island</th>
<th>Nunavut</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tourism is highly centralized and all levels of government (regional, provincial, national) place high emphasis on state regulation</td>
<td>All levels of government work towards empowerment of local initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government vigorously encourages commercial development and mass tourism is supported</td>
<td>Formalized “community-based” tourism development planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainable tourism development is a kind of “window-dressing”</td>
<td>Tourism strategy emphasizes sustainability and identifies measurable objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>National, provincial and regional economic development strategies – level of benefit to communities and local people appears inconsequential when compared to emphasis on economic impact for government perceived priorities</td>
<td>Attempt to spread the economic benefits of the industry (diversifies where community visits occur and facilitates interactions with local economic structures)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Aboriginal Control of Tourism Resource</th>
<th>The participation of Aboriginals in decision-making is currently non-existent in Hainan and government suppresses any “true” autonomous rights</th>
<th>Land Claims agreements negotiated (e.g., signed May 1993, in effect as of April 1, 1999)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal populations are not heavily involved in tourism product development or ownership, but are employed as staff for cultural presentations or in service sector in government created “folk villages”</td>
<td>Inuit have increasing control over regional and community development and the commodification of the tourism resource</td>
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<tr>
<th>Impacts on Tourism Product Development and Authenticity</th>
<th>Cultural commodification is fostered through state policies and are associated with specific state standardized cultural markers</th>
<th>Government tourism material promotes cultural and societal change (Note: However, inconsistent messages are still apparent in how Aboriginals are represented and how their culture is promoted)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fossilization of cultural traditions</td>
<td>Behavioral and educational guidelines for tourists encourage respectful treatment of Aboriginal people and discourage their touristic objectification (i.e. permission to photograph, not “historic” pieces)</td>
<td>Dynamic nature of Aboriginal culture is highlighted</td>
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**Table 1: Creating a Framework for Analysis**
Using the Framework: Further Examples of Aboriginal Cultural Tourism in Canada’s North

In this section, two northern examples of Aboriginal cultural tourism products that have made direct links to cultural empowerment objectives are highlighted: The Carcross/Tagish First Nation’s Four Mountain Resort in the Yukon Territory, and Cruise North Expeditions Inc. in the eastern Arctic.

The village of Carcross and the settlement of Tagish are located South of Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory. Tlingit people belonging to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation (C/TFN) make up about half of the total population of these two communities (compared to 20-percent representation of First Nations people in the overall Yukon population) (Yukon Chamber of Commerce, 2004). The C/TFN initialled their Final and Self-Government Agreements with the Yukon and Federal Governments in October 2003, and their land claims vote was approved in February 2005, and ratified in May 2005 (Destination Carcross, 2005).

As part of “Destination Carcross” (www.destinationcarcross.com) the C/TFN have proposed the Four Mountains Resort project (www.fourmountainsresort.com). The resort is a year-round international destination resort and heritage centre. It is a C/TFN majority owned partnership between the C/TFN, White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad, and the Yukon Territorial Government. Planned for completion in 2006, its goal is to generate sustainable economic development for the benefit of its members, the region, and the entire Yukon. The resort is founded on the Clan system of government and Circle governance principles. These incorporate a more culturally traditional approach to governance (Carcross/Tagish First Nation, 2005; Four Mountains Resort, 2004). Broad-based community consultation with members of the C/TFN has taken place and resulted in the development of four grassroots codes of conduct — environmental, cultural, community benefit and business standards (Four Mountains Resort, 2004). Once approved, these codes will guide the future development of the tourism industry in the C/TFN traditional territory.

A less documented but equally compelling tourism initiative is Cruise North Expeditions Inc. (www.cruisenorthexpeditions.com). Owned by the Makivik Corporation of Quebec, its first expeditions were launched in the summer of 2005. Makivik is an investment corporation “where traditional values are married with innovative operational approaches.” It was created from the first Aboriginal land claim settlement agreement in Canada, and is wholly owned by the Inuit of Nunavik in northern Quebec. Cruise North Expeditions Inc. claims “the Inuit (formerly known as the Eskimo) can now preserve their culture by sharing their traditions and customs with guests while putting them in touch with the true spirit, scenic wonders and abundant wildlife of the North.”

Importantly, and in addition to the characteristics mentioned in the framework, Aboriginal product development in the Yukon and in Nunavik is
further supported by a variety of non-governmental Aboriginal advocacy and product development support organizations. For instance, The Yukon First Nations Tourism Association (YFNTA) (http://www.yfnta.org) and Aboriginal Tourism Canada (ATC) (http://www.aboriginaltourism.ca), Nunavik Tourism (http://www.nunavik-tourism.com/), and Nunavut Tourism (http://www.nunatour.nt.ca). All of these organizations assist Aboriginal tourism development and are concerned with market and industry-based issues (i.e., tourist satisfaction). However, of particular relevance to this study, they also incorporate mandates that facilitate cultural empowerment through cultural tourism. These include, to: 1) assist with product development; 2) facilitate Aboriginal ownership of cultural tourism activities; 3) foster sensitivity and awareness about Aboriginal cultures in tourism markets; and 4) facilitate cultural empowerment and revival within host communities (for instance, through teaching young people about their history and heritage).

In both cases, further research is necessary to assess how the characteristics identified in the framework, and present in the product development stages, have impacted upon: 1) the “authenticity” of the actual cultural tourism product, and 2) on Aboriginal empowerment. Still, there seems to be significant tendencies in both tourism initiatives to have enjoyed many of the characteristics identified in the Nunavut example in the framework presented earlier. It would appear that the cultural empowerment potential has at least been mobilized.

Given the challenges for cultural tourism to produce positive benefits of any kind to Aboriginal people, even under the best of circumstances (Greenwood, 1977; Johnston & Haider, 1993; McIntosh, Hinch & Ingram, 2002), there are no guarantees that cultural empowerment will occur. Nonetheless, and fundamentally, the question being asked is a simple one: If Aboriginal people are not involved in tourism planning, are subjected to rigorously and externally sponsored mass tourism and commercial development, are coerced or otherwise encouraged to participate in cultural commodification processes aimed at pleasing tourists and making money, and where they do not reap any benefits, economic or otherwise, how, then, can they become empowered through their involvement in cultural tourism activities?

**Conclusion**

This study suggests that cultural tourism development that is supported by political, social and economic processes can increase self-determination of marginalized cultural groups. Government strategies can encourage cultural tourism to be part of a cultural empowerment process through processes that devolve decision-making power to cultural groups. The principles of community-based tourism and sustainable tourism can provide some of the tools necessary to encourage self-determination. Increased self-determination can provide the means for Aboriginal and other marginalized cultural groups to
define how “authentic” can be used for tourism purposes. In turn, self-defined and controlled cultural tourism practices can increase cultural empowerment.

This study advances the possibility that “authenticity” in cultural tourism need not be either oppressive nor inherently culturally destructive. Aboriginal cultures that have access to self-determination processes – not symbolic power but meaningful and operationalized – are exemplary of how “authenticity” can be defined and used for empowerment purposes. They also suggest that this decision-making control can transform cultural tourism into a significant empowerment tool.

Tourism, like other activities or phenomena that operate in oppressive environments, will be subject to the consequences of broad based socio-economic, political, and cultural policies and administrative structures that allow pervasive disempowerment of vulnerable cultural groups and communities to flourish. “Authenticity” when defined by outside forces, can lead to definitions based on “origins” and be linked to colonial legacies. When authenticity is defined through community-based tourism planning processes, and apply the principles of sustainability, are more likely to facilitate cultural empowerment. Through this, they are provided with opportunities for authenticity to be linked to “sincerity.” As a result, interactions and relationships can highlight the dynamic nature of cultures and peoples, and acknowledge present day realities.

This study has also suggested that democratic forms of government can privilege the creation of strategic options, and decrease the negative impacts that sometimes appear to be inevitable when Aboriginal culture is sold for tourism purposes. Perhaps more than anything else, this investigation demonstrates that the control of Aboriginal cultural tourism resources is most present when local, regional, and national governments support self-determination processes. Further research is required to test the framework and would lead to important insights on tourism in northern Canadian Aboriginal communities. Other democratic countries, with Aboriginal communities that are investigating tourism in similar ways to those in Canada, might prove to be fitting comparative research sites: for instance, New Zealand, Australia, or parts of Scandinavia.

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