Indigenous Tourism and the Heiltsuk Nation

History of the Heiltsuk Nation

Originally occupying over 50 communities, the Heiltsuk Nation have lived within their territory from time-immemorial. Confirming Heiltsuk oral history, the most recent archeological findings confirmed that the Heiltsuk have occupied this area on the central coast for 14,000+ years.

1833 - Hudson's Bay Company build Fort McLaughlin
1860 - Smallpox epidemic spreads throughout the coast
1870 - Continued Amalgamation to ‘Qelc
1902 - 1910 - Community established a strong economy with; houses, boardwalk, hospital, church, stores, and wharf. Bella Bella was already the 2nd largest community on the coast.
1895-1995 - The Airport and BC Ferries Terminal were built, Bella Bella revitalized activity on the central coast, reclaiming the status of being the main contact point on the central coast
2018 - Community has; a community hall, hospital, church, all levels of schools, health centre, fish plant, stores, post office, and much more. Todays Heiltsuk Population is 2267, with 1168 living on reserve.

Heiltsuk Nation and Tourism

The Heiltsuk Nation has been exploring the possibilities of tourism and the impacts it may have on its community since the 1980’s (Harris, 2018), the interest was high enough that tourism was added to various 5 and 10-year strategic plans. Today, the Heiltsuk have established a Tourism and Retail Board through their Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation, with the intention of moving forward within the tourism industry. The Nation recognizes the many unique tourism opportunities, and the economic benefits of sustainable tourism, available on the coast and have explored partnerships with surrounding Nations (AtBC, 2016).

Tourism Opportunities

The Heiltsuk Territory is a remarkable tourism destination for many companies today (Harris, 2018), the Nation is exploring ways to respectfully incorporate this industry into the community. The tourism opportunities that are available are endless and can contribute to the local economy by creating more jobs to accompany the seasonal employment. Some tourism development opportunities include; guided tours, wildlife viewings, parks and trails, campgrounds, hotels, restaurants, lodges, and local markets (Harris, 2018). The local culture and history provides a rich educational resource for visitors and can be delivered through interpretation and personal stories, and if done right, can attract visitors world-wide.

185 VISITORS TO HEILTSUK TERRITORY IN 2018

- Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre
- Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre

References


