BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM:
Highlights of the IIPT Second Global Conference for the Travel and Tourism Industry in Northern Ontario

Stephen W. Boyd* and Richard W. Butler**

INTRODUCTION

The Second Global Conference, organized by the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT)[1], was held 12–16 September 1994 in Montreal, Quebec. The theme of the conference, "Building A Sustainable World Through Tourism", was aimed at building on the experiences of the First Global Conference (Tourism—A Vital Force For Peace, Vancouver, 1988) by illustrating, through what were entitled "success stories", the potential of the travel and tourism industry to contribute to a sustainable, peaceful world.

This paper focuses on issues addressed at the conference that were considered to be relevant to the travel and tourism industry in northern Ontario, and on themes that have more in common with a northern environment: namely, ecotourism, community-based tourism, parks and protected areas, indigenous peoples' tourism, sustainable tourism development, and the relationship of the tourism industry to the environment. The authors are cognizant of the relative importance of the remaining themes, but given the focus on northern Ontario these are discussed more briefly and in general terms only. This review concentrates particularly on those presentations attended personally by the reviewers, with only brief comments on the other sessions.

Queen Noor of Jordan (the Honorary Conference Chairperson) opened the conference by challenging participants to clarify the contribution that tourism can make to the shared goals of peace, understanding, and sustainable economic interaction among all peoples. Dr. Noel Brown, Director of the United Nations Environment Program

(UNEP), gave the keynote address. He spoke on the Agenda 21 framework reached at the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); a framework for "unprecedented cooperation for sustainable development among all sectors of society to consciously create the future", and on the potential of this framework for the travel and tourism industry.

Case studies of success stories were presented on the following themes: ecotourism; rural and community-based tourism; parks and protected areas; indigenous peoples' tourism; sustainable tourism development; the tourism industry and the environment; culture and heritage; education; promotion of international understanding and cooperation; barrier-free tourism; alternative conflict resolution; and people can make a difference.

CASE STUDIES OF "SUCCESS STORIES"

Ecotourism

Five sessions were held on ecotourism. These focused on (1) protecting and evaluating the ecotourism experience from a global perspective; (2) national ecotourism strategies; (3) ecotourism in subarctic environments; (4) environmentally sensitive adventure tourism; and (5) innovations in ecotourism lodges. With respect to the first session, M.E. Wood (1994), Executive Director of the Ecotourism Society, outlined preliminary results of her organizations' Green Evaluation Program pilot project in Ecuador; a program designed to bring accountability to ecotourism travel operations. From responses given by travelers during their trips, tour operators were evaluated against set standards

* Lecturer, The University of Western Ontario, Department of Geography, London, Ontario.

** Professor, The University of Western Ontario, Department of Geography, London, Ontario.

[1] International Institute for Peace through Tourism, 3680 rue, de la Montagne, Quebec H3G 2A8.

on items such as the quality of the guiding service provided, information that was given on low-impact tourism, and efforts to provide conservation and community benefits. During the second session, papers on the development of ecotourism within Belize, Australia, Cuba, and Dominica were presented. One idea common throughout these presentations was the need (regardless of the locale in which ecotourism is being promoted) to develop ethics (operator/visitor codes of practice) and standards for ecotourism. In the third session, presentations were given on ecotourism in the Boreal Forest Region, rural Alaska, and northern Ontario. Ecotourism was shown to be the cornerstone of a strategy to implement sustainable development in forestry through integrated resource management for the Foothills Model Forest of central Alberta. Ecotourism was also selected by the state of Alaska to promote cultural tourism and sustainable development for many of its native villages, making use of financial and technical resources available through the Rural Economic Development Initiative Program (REDI) established by the Alaska Department of Community and Regional Affairs in 1988. With respect to papers on ecotourism in northern Ontario, Twynam and Robinson (1994) focused on the demand for ecotourism opportunities, and outlined ecotourism visitor preferences for particular forest settings/environments, activities, and desired experiences or outcomes. Boyd and Butler (1994) addressed the need to identify only those areas that are suitable for ecotourism, and provided a method to accomplish this by using Geographical Information System (GIS) technology to match ecotourism criteria (however defined) with those characteristics of the destination area. It was noted that GIS is only a tool, and that the choice to promote ecotourism in any locale is a human decision. However, this new technology can play an important role. The fourth session focused on the topic of environmentally sensitive adventure tourism. One paper examined this form of tourism in the Sagamartha (Everest) National Park in Nepal. It noted key points of the study as they related to other adventure tourism destinations in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas of the world. The authors also stressed the importance of controlling the numbers of tourists involved so as to prevent degradation of the environment, the local culture, and the desired travel experience of the adventure tourist. A final session presented some innovations in ecotourism lodges.

Rural and Community-based Tourism

Seven sessions examined this theme, and four aspects were addressed: (1) how rural development can be achieved through tourism; (2) an overview to building sustainable communities through tourism; (3) the experiences of community-based tourism within a northern, rural, coastal, and resort-type setting; and (4) the impacts of community-based tourism. The first aspect was examined through several case studies for tourism projects in Southeast Asia and South America. With respect to the second aspect, a number of papers focused on the need for adopting a holistic and integrated approach for developing the necessary foundations and building blocks to ensure sustainable and community-driven tourism. Several papers were considered to have

relevance for northern Ontario. For example, the potential of community-based ecotourism development was illustrated in Canada's eastern Arctic. Issues of note included the role of government support for marketing and product development, the need for local training, auditing operations for impacts with community monitoring of activities, and direct community participation in the planning and running of the industry. Within the context of the Northwest Territories, another paper focused on the idea of community capability as the approach taken to tourism. This involved first undertaking a needs assessment, whereby all stakeholders are addressed, before performance-driven training is provided. Loeks (1994) spoke on the turnover that has occurred with ecotourism operations and offered some principles for success. He suggested that operations should be more customer-driven than product driven. Regarding the fourth aspect (impacts), Long (1994) used the case study of Bali to discuss how community characteristics affect the process of impacts. She suggested that because the characteristics of communities differ, the degree of stress caused by tourism development can also change. Korca (1994) looked at the environmental impacts of tourism as perceived by local residents for Antalya, Turkey, and concluded that in order to achieve sustainable tourism development (minimize adverse impacts and viewed favorably by the host population) tourism planning at the local level should be based on overall development goals and priorities as identified by residents.

Parks and Protected Areas

Five aspects were examined under the general title of parks and protected areas. These included: (1) guidelines and resources for sustainable tourism in national protected areas; (2) sustainable tourism in national protected areas; (3) sustainable tourism development in sensitive ecosystems; (4) visitor and community involvement in the protection of natural habitats; and (5) conserving wildlife and wilderness lands. For the purposes of the present discussion, only the second, third, and fourth aspects are examined in more detail. With respect to sustainable tourism in national protected areas (see Fig. 1), papers were given on balancing national and cultural demands in Australia's Great Barrier Reef; sustainable tourism in the national protected

Figure 1. Parks and protected areas, important ecotourism attractions, must be managed to ensure sustainability.

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area of Lac Saint-Pierre, Quebec; and on sustainable tourism in Yosemite National Park, California. When sensitive ecosystems were involved, case studies from biosphere reserves on Virginia's eastern shore, the high elevation wilderness of Nepal, and the "unique" touristic resource of Hanauma Bay, Hawaii, illustrated the need for management action geared toward the mitigation and containment of impacts within a specified standard. All three case studies demonstrated the need for managers to understand, in sufficient detail, the nature and severity of impacts. In the Nepal case study, impacts at the micro and regional level were examined with respect to their implications to policy and management of tourism at the national level. Regarding visitor and community involvement in the protection of natural habitats, one case study, which focused on three examples of ecotourism in Belize, showed that the contribution to protected area budgets is small, but that the use of tourism related fees would generate substantial revenue for protected area management.

Indigenous Peoples' Tourism

This section had 13 papers in the original program, but only one (Parker 1994) dealt specifically with Canada's indigenous peoples. This author described the work of the Canadian National Aboriginal Tourism Association (CNATA) in a brief but challenging paper. He dealt with promotion of aboriginal tourism and associated markets, aspects of human resource development, and product development and communications and placed these in the context of overall goals and a mission statement. (CNATA has additional information, including a video and an orientation package, available from its Ottawa office. For readers concerned with developing tourism in the northern parts of Canada, in which aboriginal peoples may wish to be involved, this material would be invaluable.) Freeman (1994), dealing with the Tjapukai Dance Theatre in Australia, illustrated what a well organized and locally controlled aboriginal tourism attraction is capable of, and how it can become a major attraction in a relatively short period of time by emphasizing authentic culture. Butler (1994) discussed general principles that should underlie the involvement of indigenous peoples in tourism. Some of these principles were also illustrated by Wesche (1994) and Colvin (1994), who described the participation of indigenous peoples in Ecuador. Both authors emphasized the importance of local involvement and support for such developments. Other papers in this section dealt with case studies on tour development, and on opportunities that have arisen from indigenous involvement in tourism.

Sustainable Tourism Development

Twenty-two papers examined the concept of sustainable tourism development in Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Caribbean. Four of these focused on tourism in environmentally sensitive areas. Some general points common to many of these presentations, and ones that may have relevance for northern Ontario, include: (1) the need to promote those characteristics that make the region unique from elsewhere; (2) the value of promoting a regions' attractions in a manner that is socially and environmentally acceptable; (3) the need to involve local communities in the decision making, planning, and development of new projects; and (4) the development of clear tourism policies that are flexible and able to adjust to changing economic climates and any new markets that may develop. With respect to sustainable tourism development in sensitive areas, papers focused on the need to identify key indicators of sustainability and of the sensitivity of systems to tourism impacts and their outcomes. Other papers focused on the development of formalized environmental guidelines of operation to standardize procedures for tourist visits to sensitive areas. As an example, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) was described.

Tourism Industry and the Environment

Three issues were examined for this theme: (1) greening of the hotel industry, (2) sustainable industry approaches at a variety of levels, and (3) creation of industry incentives for sustainability. Regarding the first theme, presentations were given on a number of environmental initiatives developed for certain hotel chains (e.g., Intercontinental, Westin, and Canadian Pacific). Also addressed were "Eco Service", which assists hotel owners and operators in implementing system-wide environmental programs, and the "Ecotel" designation, which provides travelers with a means to compare environmental efforts within the hotel industry. The second issue saw a number of international or Canadian case studies on the development of sustainable tourism strategies. For example, strategies developed in Nova Scotia emphasized the growing market for adventure travel and ecotourism. With some international examples (e.g., northern Ireland, Wales, and London, U.K.), the focus was on heritage, rural, and urban tourism, respectively. A new initiative of the travel and tourism industry, known as Green Globe, was presented as an example of the role the industry can play in creating incentives for sustainability. Implemented by the World Travel and Tourism Council, it represents a first step in the development of industry-wide environmental guidelines, and is the first global environmental management and public awareness program for the entire travel and tourism industry.

Culture and Heritage

This was one of the largest sections in the conference, with 22 papers listed in the program. A number of these had implications of some applicability to the northern Ontario context. Galbraith (1994) described development of the Oregon Trail, but emphasis was on the opening of the trail and related publicity rather than on specific details of its development. A paper by Francis (1994) on heritage tourism partnerships in the southwestern United States presented some interesting implications on developing partnerships between two levels of government, local communities, and native groups to deal with topics such as heritage interpretation, preservation, and education. Hargrove (1994) discussed 16 pilot projects dealing with development, marketing, and interpretation of heritage tourism features in a variety of locations. Hill and Gibbons (1994)

focused on heritage trails in the state of Nebraska. They presented interesting examples of historic trails, their links to sustainable tourism, advantages of such development, and unfulfilled potential. Schutz (1994) dealt with a scenario of some relevance for northern Ontario; namely, a town whose economy was based on logging faced the problem of its sawmill closing and the need to find alternative sources of income. In this case, development links with native artisans provided a base for a tourism industry. Other papers in this section covered specific examples of museum and heritage centers, trade in indigenous crafts, and case studies of cultural tourism. Randall (1994) discussed the Canadian "rails to trails" movement.

Education

Sixteen papers were scheduled on this topic; however, only three or four had potential relevance to northern Ontario. Brayley (1994) discussed a computer-based teaching tool designed for undergraduate students in tourism. The purpose of this tool was to develop an understanding of the impacts of tourism and to relate financial goals with effects on local inhabitants. A similar concept, although not related to computer applications but to training in trail construction in South Africa, was presented by Hattingh (1994). The focus was upon developing trails in a wide variety of ecosystems, minimizing impacts from use, improving and broadening the experience of tourists, and educating operators on proper trail construction and operation. Crosby (1994) discussed the need, perhaps rather controversially, to "train" local people in sustainable tourism and communication techniques. Other papers on this theme included three on conflict-related issues, three on formal programs in tourism education, two on cultural awareness, two on educational opportunities, and three on international issues related to peace and tourism.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

At the end of each concurrent session, subject areas considered worthy of further discussion were identified. These formed the basis of what were called "Action Task Group Proposals". From the various proposals that emerged, a millennium vision of the travel and tourism industry as a "Global Peace Industry" was launched at the close of the conference. This would be known as the "Montreal Charter–Tourism 2000". Conference participants were encouraged to outline proposals for a millennium project in support of this vision and to identify the role they envisaged IIPT could play as a catalyst in the process of initiating action.

For the purpose of this report, the outcomes of the Action Task Group Proposals are used to offer some conclusions and implications for the travel and tourism industry in northern Ontario. While the proposals were more international in scope, they included, to a certain extent, ideas that could be equally applied at both national and regional levels. In attempting to apply them within the context of

northern Ontario, it should be pointed out that the relevance of these proposals varies according to theme. For the purpose of this discussion, emphasis was placed on the ideas that emerged from those groups that examined the following: rural and community-based tourism; parks, protected areas, and ecotourism; cultural heritage and indigenous peoples' tourism; and communications and marketing. The common visions and specific actions required to realize these are outlined below.

Rural and Community-based Tourism

The common vision here is the need to promote self-empowerment at the community level, develop sustainable tourism, and ensure quality of life. To achieve this vision, community tourism needs restructuring to emphasize that it must preserve and enhance the integrity of economic, social, and cultural environments, and sustain or improve the existing quality of life. In realizing this vision, the travel and tourism industry must develop strategic plans at the community level; establish community resource databases; educate communities on tourism; and have community representation in all stages of development and planning, and at all levels of decision making.

Parks, Protected Areas, and Ecotourism

Another common vision for the travel and tourism industry is to educate tourists on the natural environment, on the nature of ecosystems in an area, and on existing legislation and management plans. In particular, there is a need to develop partnerships and cooperation with local people. Research to determine an area's carrying capacity, to select suitable types of development, and to identify areas that are not appropriate for any development is also required. Another vision of the industry deals with promoting the use of areas by invitation through the establishment of set limits on the numbers of visitors permitted. Other visions stress the promotion of equity, responsible marketing of the proper use of parks and protected areas, and the request that more areas be set aside for protection. Actions that may be taken in pursuit of these visions involve collecting and sharing of information on codes of ethics, ecotourism, alternative technologies, and new ways in which to monitor and manage areas; listing environmentally friendly suppliers; and creating guidelines for environmentally friendly conferences. Implementing principles would require that actions be customized to local situations; that creativity would be encouraged and fostered; that more cooperation would exist within the tourism industry; and given the abuse that ecotourism has received, that a new concept such as ecointegrity replace this term.

Cultural Heritage and Indigenous Peoples' Tourism

When promoting this type of tourism there is a need to include all indigenous cultures and all aspects of cultural heritage tourism, including the emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical aspects of the people.

Communications and Marketing

The travel and tourism industry has an important role to play in communications and marketing by creating awareness of the positive aspects of sustainable development, and by reaching out to consumers, businesses, government, communities, and educators. Better use of the media, journals, and industry publications is needed to inform the public about tourism ventures.

Although the relevance of presentations to northern Ontario may not be as high as hoped, some common points were made. First, the views and preferences of local people must feature prominently, if not decisively, if tourism development is to be successfully accepted. Second, the use of local knowledge with respect to such factors as location, scale, nature, and speed of development can be an important factor in appropriate development. Third, many of the problems faced by destination areas and local communities are common throughout the world, although their significance varies considerably from region to region. In almost all cases, careful planning, consideration, and discussion of likely issues and outcomes prior to development will improve the likelihood of acceptance and success.

In conclusion, the conference provided an opportunity for sharing a large number of "success stories" in tourism, and for identifying common attributes of successful development.

NOTES

A number of workshops to deal with ecotourism, cultural heritage and tourism, and alternative conflict resolution were scheduled on the weekend prior to the conference. The workshops have not been reviewed here; however, one that dealt with ecotourism may be of interest to NODA readers. Further information on this may be obtained from the Ecotourism Society, North Bennington, Vermont, U.S.A. 05257.

Readers desiring additional information on any of the sessions can purchase tape recordings of most of these by contacting Conference Tape, 8 Woodburn Drive, Ottawa, Ontario, KIB 3A7. The charge is $10.00 per session, although reduced rates may possibly be negotiated if a complete set of recordings or large numbers are being purchased.

A conference proceedings, planned on the success stories, is expected to be available in 1995. For those interested, more details can be obtained by contacting the IIPT directly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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