

TO DO!97
Contest Socially Responsible Tourism

Award Winner

SHAWENEQUANAPE KIPICHEWIN
(Anishinabe Village Inc.)

represented by

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Rationale for the Award

by

Dr. Christian Adler

1. INTRODUCTION

At the request of the Study Group for Tourism and Development the author went to Winnipeg, Manitoba in December 1997 to make himself familiar with the proposed project. He also wanted to check whether an award would be justified on the basis of the criteria of the TO DO!97 Contest. The application was handed in by the Travel Agency TALKING BRIDGE GmbH in Munich.

Due to the insights gained during this research tour and the information received, it is recommended to award a prize to the West Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDCO) at the ITB 1998. Such an award is well justified in recognition of aims, working principles, activities and the success achieved by WREDCO in the realisation of the project ANISHINABE VILLAGE.

ANISHINABE VILLAGE

The tourism project ANISHINABE VILLAGE is situated about 250 km north-west of Winnipeg, in the Canadian Riding Mountain National Park, a former territory of the Anishinabe. Anishinabe is the name of an indigenous tribe belonging to the Ojibway or Chippewa Indians; from an ethnic point of view they are a branch of the Algonkin. They do not call themselves "Indians" but - as all other indigenous peoples in Canada - (People of the) First Nations.

ANISHINABE VILLAGE is the property of the West Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDCO), a development organisation in the hands of the tribe/ethnic group, which receives public funds for the members of the Anishinabe Reservations. Six sub-tribes (bands) receive an annual contribution of 500,000 Can. \$ for their livelihood. Until a few years ago this amount was split up equitably among the members of the reservation, so that in the end nothing much remained for the individual person (less than 1,000 Can. \$ per head, per year).

Faced with this unsatisfactory situation, the people came up with the "vision" that the money available should be spent and invested more meaningfully. The director of WREDCO, Richard Gaywish, describes the reasons as follows: The money "must generate new income, must open up business opportunities, create jobs and earn profit, which in turn could be put into new developments so that after a few years the returns would be more than just social welfare". After they had agreed on this concept, only a small portion of the means available is allowed to be transferred to the respective "bands" (sub-groups). The remaining funds are invested by WREDCO into projects and activities, of which ANISHINABE VILLAGE has meanwhile become one of the most important ones.

ANISHINABE VILLAGE is a Tipi-Camp situated in a beautiful landscape - in the midst of a virgin forest with an expanse of birches and pine trees. It borders on Lake Katherine on whose shores one can find beavers.

At this site there are forty tipis (Indian tents) available for guests. These tents are built in the traditional way from young tree-trunks which are covered with strong sailcloth. Each tipi can house four to six guests. The tipis are scattered in groups of two or three on different clearings in the forest. Therefore one does not have the impression of a compact (Indian) campsite.

In addition there are parking lots for guests travelling with their own caravan or tent. Guests can enjoy the usual commodities, bathrooms, toilets and showers. In 1997 a restaurant was added with about 60 seats and a simple but well-equipped kitchen.

There are also a number of service-buildings made of wood at the site (which can also be used as rain shelters) and places where local people and guests can meet each other. It is through these encounters that holiday makers have a chance to learn about the culture of the Anishinabe.

At the centre of the "Interpretive Centre Programmes", right in the forest, there is a place on which four tipis were constructed, a wigwam, a fire place, frames to stretch fur-skins etc., equipped with simple chairs to sit on. This is the place where guests can learn how to make traditional Indian commodities or else how to paint the hide of wapiti deer. While they are at work they listen to stories of the chiefs revealing something about the philosophy of the ancient prairie cultures, they also participate in the teachings of the interpreters. These are especially trained members of the tribe who are thus able to tell the visitors about the history and the traditions of the Anishinabe.

The guests are encouraged to take part in the activities offered, such as guided hikes through the national park. These tours impart some of the tribe's traditional knowledge on flora and fauna, about the art of survival in the wilderness or about other Indian skills.

Day visitors to the camp pay an entrance fee at the gate; if they participate in the cultural programme of the Anishinabe they have to pay an extra fee. Package tourists from abroad have to pay an additional amount of 5 Can. \$ per head and day. ANISHINABE VILLAGE opens in May and closes late in autumn.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A historical appraisal would seem quite appropriate to understand the project as a whole: The Anishinabe/Ojibway-First Nations have traditionally been living in the North American prairie, the so-called "wild rice" area. The name originates from a grain cultivated by the people which at that time was the staple food in the region. (Across the border to what are now the USA, were the territories of the Sioux tribes). Hunting buffalo, moose and deer was another important activity of the people. The First Nations made their canoes and equipment from materials found in the prairie and birch forests which surrounded them. They were living in the wigwam, a low cupola tent built with branches and covered by bark; when they were travelling they used cone-shaped tents, covered by buffalo skin, the tipis.

Horses were only introduced in the middle of the 18th century. The culture of Indians on horseback, a cliché which is still in our heads today, has, from then on, gradually developed in the prairies. The military submission of the prairie Indians in the second half of the past century and the elimination of the bison through white hunters by 1880 has ushered in the decline of their cultures. The prairie tribes were forced to sign the Indian Treaty of 1874 which only gave them the right to settle on small tracts of their former territories. In some instances they were forced to resettle elsewhere. The reservations allotted to the Indians are often situated on barren land; and soon these reservations were among the poorest living areas in North America.

Because of these historical events we find today quite a colourful mix of various peoples on the original territory of the Anishinabe/Ojibway, such as First Nations, Métis, Ukrainians, Scandinavians and Hutterers of German origin.

Despite the end of the bloody Indian wars, despite the reservations and privileges granted by the Federal Government in the Indian Treaty (such as tax exemptions in the reservations), despite the guarantee of these rights in the Canadian Constitution, and despite the existence of the Ministry for Indian Affairs - despite all this, the violence which

the First Nations were confronted with, the discrimination and the alienation of their children have still been prevalent in the past decades and are so up to now (cf. article in the "Frankfurter Rundschau" of 01/09/98 at the end of this appraisal). The consequences of this development have been disastrous. They led to the loss of traditional values, of self-esteem and self-respect. These values were replaced by self-pity and, resulting from this, a "you owe me" mentality vis-à-vis the state. Life in the reservations is characterised by rampant unemployment, lethargy and poverty. Despite the social welfare provided by the state, the Indians really had no chance to eke out a living. It is this atmosphere that leads to suicides and alcohol addiction. The consequences of alcoholism in turn have had disastrous effects and have led to the disintegration of the tribes.

The land of the Rolling River District on which the Anishinabe have settled since the beginning of the 18th century was first declared a nature reserve in 1895, and in 1929 a national park - today's Riding Mountain National Park where ANISHINABE VILLAGE is situated. As a consequence of the area being declared a national park, the Anishinabe automatically lost their hereditary hunting rights as well as the right to set up traps. The Anishinabe believe that in the wake of all this the authorities "overlooked" the fact that as a tribe deeply rooted in this region they had a very close and intimate relationship to this area. Not only because of the settlements there, the hunting grounds and the cemeteries. Because of their intrinsic wisdom, their intimate knowledge of the place, and because of the considerate attitude which they have always shown towards natural resources, they would have been, (and they still would be) excellent partners and could have rendered useful services in the establishment and upkeep of the park: as partners of the park management, as employees in the administration, in forestry measures or simply as park rangers. But quite obviously the authorities did not want this to happen. On the contrary: In the thirties, according to the information of the Anishinabe, the last families were "physically removed" from their traditional homeland.

The staff of the national park have always been recruited from somewhere outside and among white people. Even today, the Anishinabe say, they had to note with regret that the local people are totally ignored and that there were no signs whatsoever that the park authority refrains from this discrimination. And this despite the fact that there are still four Anishinabe communities living very close to the park: Keeseekoowenin, Waywayseecappo, Valley River and Rolling River. Only two members have so far, and only recently, succeeded in being employed by the park authority - at least for unskilled jobs.

3. THE NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

By the beginning of the eighties a new generation had grown up. The Anishinabe began to grasp that the influences they had been exposed to were increasingly pulling down and destroying their tribe. Young adults who had grown up with parents addicted to alcohol, were suffering from traumatic and revolting experiences; they no longer wanted to be subjected to a climate which inevitably led to this state of affairs. Gradually, they said, they had become conscious of their own values again because there were still some tribal chiefs who had never followed the fatal spirit of the age. They had thus regained a sense of identity and self-respect - by turning their back to the products of the white people, above all to alcohol.

As a consequence, some of them had finally developed the vision, they said, that they were able to shape their own lives, to actively look for alternatives, and - in solidarity with others - to search for new income-earning possibilities.

One of the first activities which was to change the terrible economic and social situation of the reservations, was the decision in 1987 taken by seven different First Nations to

jointly found the South West Indian Training Committee (S.W.I.T.C.). For the first time the members of this committee were able to get training in their community and to finish a job training which was officially recognised.

One of the first training programmes was organised to reduce illiteracy; but there were also courses to get a driving licence, to become a cook, painter, carpenter and bus driver. Trainings were held for clerks and nurses, there were courses for the management of moose farms or for small entrepreneurial activities. The purpose of these programmes was not only to meet the economic needs of the communities; these need-oriented and practical training courses were also meant to open up acceptable and creative possibilities for the members of the tribe and within the group. Some of the teachers belonged to the First Nations, others were recruited from outside and were hosted in the respective reservations for some time.

Only because the aim was clear could all this be achieved and has the development not lost its momentum. The intention was that the social welfare which the government granted should finally - as help for self-help - lead to financial autonomy and should no longer be used to manage social misery as was the case in the past. In 1990 these considerations led to the foundation of WREDCO, the West Region Economic Development Corporation, which is now looking after the interests of the six First Nations of the Anishinabe. A Board of Directors composed of the chiefs of the respective groups, is serving the Corporation as a steering body.

The welfare funds and all other profits are now transferred to WREDCO which in turn invests, reinvests and also distributes dividends. The main task of the Corporation is the implementation of business ventures and community-oriented development projects as well as the necessary fund-raising. The Corporation taps financial means from various sources of the Canadian Federal Government and the state of Manitoba. Sometimes this happens in cooperation with other organisations since the First Nations which come under the Indian Treaty often do not get public funding for communal development projects.

4. POLITICAL RELEVANCE

The most crucial objective that WREDCO pursues and the vision of those supporting the corporation is, that the society takes notice of the Anishinabe and gives them due respect: Through the development of a sound economic venture, whose reputation can no longer be ignored by the established Canadian society. The solid reputation of WREDCO, it was reported, had been of great importance even in the planning stages of ANISHINABE VILLAGE. In fact, this was the precondition to be able to negotiate a lease with the national park authorities for an area from which one had been evicted in former years. This made it possible in turn to secure the financial means for the project and to get the tourism project off the ground.

In 1998 the ANISHINABE VILLAGE becomes part of the marketing concept of the National Park Administration. This is seen by the Anishinabe as a further step towards the recognition of the First Nations as a partner, and they cherish the hope that the prevalent discrimination will gradually abate.

5. APPRAISAL

After comparing the WREDCO activities with the criteria of the TO DO!97 for socially responsible tourism the following appraisal can be made:

Contest criterion:

Involvement of the different interests and requirements of the local people through participation

The project meets this demand because six different Anishinabe reservations have the sole ownership of WREDCO. The reservations are represented by their chiefs who had planned and implemented ANISHINABE VILLAGE in consultation with the tribal elders. WREDCO manages, controls and takes the profits from the total income of ANISHINABE VILLAGE.

One must note, however, that the camp which opened in 1995 is still not breaking even. This is because the number of visitors is still insufficient, although 150 overnight guests per year should be sufficient to finance the staff and the maintenance of the camp. The amortisation period for the investments in ANISHINABE VILLAGE was fixed for 5 years.

In 1997, roughly 6 000 visitors came to the camp, but most of them as day tourists. About 100 guests were from abroad, but only 40 foreign visitors came through the travel agency TALKING BRIDGE, and they stayed for a minimum of two days up to a maximum of five weeks.

The staff of the camp comprised 28 members of the Anishinabe in 1997. They came from three reservations: Rolling River, Keeseekoowenin and Waywayseecappo. Among them was a cook, various interpreters and tour guides. The cook was paid on a day rate, the other staff get paid according to the hours they work. The head tour guide, the tribal chiefs and the story tellers receive an additional honorarium. During the pow-wows (ritual celebration) which are organised twice a year, the number of employees is increased by about ten persons.

Contest criterion:

Strengthening the awareness among the local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development in their daily economic, social and cultural life.

All First Nations of the Anishinabe were consulted during the preparatory phase of the project, and they were encouraged to participate in the venture. The direction WREDCO is taking aims at improving the living conditions in the reservations and is pursued with the approval of representatives of the Anishinabe communities.

The travellers and the hosts receiving them are getting familiar with each other in ANISHINABE VILLAGE through the cultural programme; they learn about the positive and negative qualities of their respective counterparts. The local people are thus able to get a first hand impression about the risks of tourism development. The participants in the training programmes have been prepared for conflict situations that may occur.

Guests from Germany, as the Anishinabe humorously report, sometimes refuse excellent native dishes such as deer and moose, because they are vegetarians. On the other hand, they, the Anishinabe, had not known before what a "muesli" was. Another story they told in the same humorous way was that some female foreign guests came with the expectation that they could also invite "their" Indian who had patiently demonstrated how

to make a moccasin during the day to the tipi in the evening - as an additional element of the cultural programme so to speak.

Contest criterion:

Participation of a broad local population strata regarding the positive economic, social and cultural effects of tourism.

At the moment the staff of ANISHINABE VILLAGE come from three different reservations. The employees receive wages based on performance. The foreign travel agency TALKING BRIDGE, Munich, calculates with a commission of 20 percent so that 80 percent of the income goes directly to WREDCO. As mentioned above the First Nations are the beneficiaries of the profit earned through various community oriented projects.

Members of the Anishinabe have access to ANISHINABE VILLAGE at any time and they make use of it, also for their own ritual dance festivals (pow-wows).

Contest criterion:

Guarantee of the attractiveness of jobs in tourism for the local people by improvement of working conditions in relation to payment, social security, working hours, education and training.

Given the prevailing unemployment in the reservations, jobs which were created by the opening of the camp for the local people were very welcome although they are only seasonal and do not provide a permanent source of income yet. What the staff and their families get from the camp so far is a small income on the side. No social security can be derived from this.

Working hours are handled in an easy-going way, depending on the demand. The local people are also available for guided hikes on week-ends. Some of the Anishinabe spend the night in the village while they are on duty, others prefer to return to the reservations and their families in the evening.

The indigenous people consider their work to be very attractive, because most of what they do are the things which used to be normal in their traditional way of life. To a certain extent they act as "teachers" in order to impart their culture to others.

Contest criterion:

Reinforcement of the local culture as well as the cultural identity of those living in tourism destination areas.

After 40 tribal chiefs had agreed to the project of ANISHINABE VILLAGE and worked out a programme together with the initiators of WREDCO, the first challenge to be met was to design a qualified training programme for the interpreters who should later work in the camp, take care of the tourists and impart the Indian culture to them. This task was carried out in cooperation with the above mentioned South West Indian Training Committee. A training programme for eleven participants for the duration of 20 weeks was elaborated. The trainees were prepared to meet the needs of tourists and any other matters in this context. All kinds of imaginable situations were practised in role plays ("What are you going to do with a person not speaking English?"); awkward questions were also asked such as "what are you going to answer if anyone says, 'you are selling

your culture““. A variety of possible solutions was drawn up in order to thoroughly prepare the trainees for the encounter with the visitors.

They learned about the flora and fauna, their own history, Indian skills and crafts which were formerly completely natural to them. A lot of these skills had long been lost and were no longer cherished. In the beginning, they said, the younger Anishinabe had for example refused to learn how to kindle fire; they thought that this was childish - until they realised that the foreign visitors valued the traditional Indian way of life, whereas they, for the most part, had felt rather disenchanted with their traditions. Through this experience many of the Anishinabe have changed their mind with respect to their traditional values. Some of them, they said, had found a completely new relationship to the hereditary traditions. They were now ready to participate in ANISHINABE VILLAGE and they understood that their involvement was worthwhile for them, too.

As mentioned several times in this paper, this aspect must be seen as the biggest achievement which the Anishinabe have made through their project. They are once more proud to belong to a First Nation, they realise the value of their own traditions and they revive their cultural heritage which had almost gone lost. What was also important for the Anishinabe, was that they were able to return to their lost territory in Riding Mountain National Park, because deep emotional feelings and relations are still attached to this territory. They were not able to buy the ground but they have taken a lease from the park authorities, and they are now once more close to their “holy mountain“ through the village.

Contest criterion:

Avoidance, minimization of social and cultural damage caused by tourism in destination areas.

The Anishinabe resent if guests try to penetrate into their intimate sphere. They were quick in rebuffing a tour operator who wanted to focus on the realm of their belief and who would have liked to misuse their rituals as a tourist show. They are very sensitive in this respect and, according to other sources, they “simply ignore“ the guest if he or she intrudes too much on them and requests something that they are not prepared to share with him or her on their own accord. What they do not want is to sell their culture; what they are willing to do is to let the visitors partake in their spiritual world.

There is a distance of about 20 km between the camp and the reservations of those responsible for it. It is therefore unlikely that any negative effect from tourist activities might affect the reservations.

Contest criterion:

Application of new methods in qualifying partnership and cooperation between the external tourism industry and the local people.

Being the sole representative of the reservations, WREDCO is the partner for the “external tourism industry“. This is different from other cases where partners are local tour operators or other agencies. As mentioned earlier in this paper, WREDCO is an enterprise whose primary objective is to generate capital for community oriented projects to the benefit of the local population.

Contest criterion:

Creation of other favourable conditions for a socially responsible tourism development in destination areas.

WREDCO offensively advocates its tourism concept in an exchange with relevant institutions at district and national level. With the assistance of a consultancy firm "Ecoplan:net, Vancouver, the concept of ANISHINABE VILLAGE was developed into a "First Nations Cultural Tourism Planning Workshop". The initiators are keen to propagate their idea to other First Nations in North America and to recommend that it should be imitated elsewhere. By doing so they want to influence the development of socially responsible and environment-friendly tourism in North America.

Contest criterion:

Projects/measures entered for the contest must be in line with the principles of environmental compatibility.

ANISHINABE VILLAGE is situated in a national park where all activities are strictly controlled by rules which make sure that no harm is done to the environment. The tents of the camp are picturesquely situated in the landscape. There are only very few buildings on the site, and since they are primarily built of wood they do not spoil the harmony of the landscape.

Conclusion:

The author considers this project to be a case in point where the Anishinabe successfully demonstrate that no situation in life is too miserable that one should not be able to pull oneself out of it - provided that people really want it and get actively involved. Those who cannot manage on their own are then carried away by the development. Meanwhile the Anishinabe have left their past behind them and they are on their way to a new and better future.