

HOW TO OPERATE A PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FAMILIARIZATION TOUR MANUAL



**FINAL REPORT FOR
DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM & CULTURE**

August 2008

1.0 PROJECT APPLICANT

Kluane Inc. Geordan Clark, General
Manager
Box 20, Burwash Landing, YT
Y0B 1V0
Work: 867-841-4274 ext.238
Cell: 778-229-6075
gclark@kluanecorp.ca

Kluane First Nation
Katie Johnson, Project Manager
Box 20, Burwash Landing, YT
Y0B 1V0
Phone:
tutchone2000@yahoo.com

2.0 PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this manual is to assist other communities with developing and conducting a Product Development Familiarization Tour (FAM) and to create a process to look at what could be done in other First Nation communities.

WHAT IS A FAM TOUR?

FAM stands for “familiarization” tour. It is bringing people (travel media, tour operators and travel agents and in this case potential business partners) to your region to experience what the area has to offer first-hand.

In this pilot project Kluane First Nation planned a product development FAM tour for a well known private Canadian tour operator. The purpose of hosting a product development FAM tour with this company and Kluane First Nation was to investigate the potential for a business partnership to develop a tour program in the Kluane region and the Kluane First Nation’s traditional territory that will meet both the vision and objectives of the two partners.

The tour operator became interested in developing a tourism product with the Kluane First Nation because our nation is located within the vast natural beauty of the Tachal Dhal (Sheep Mountain) and Asi Keyi (Grandfathers Country in Southern Tutchone) region which is shared with the Kluane National Park and Reserve (KNP&R). The Kluane National Park & Reserve is also home to the world’s largest non-polar ice fields, vast green valleys, glacial lakes, big game and is also home to Canada’s highest mountain peak, Mount Logan.

Kluane First Nation and this tour company have envisioned the potential for partnering on a number of tourism opportunities within the Kluane National Park and traditional territory and that was the beginning of the development of the FAM tour. The end goal was to realize what it will take to develop a world-class tourism product that will be most beneficial for all involved stakeholders.

3.0 PROJECT SUMMARY

The Kluane First Nation hosted a three day tour which was held July 7 - 10, 2008 to discover potential areas that the company could operate in and what the tourism product might look like. It involved viewing the Kluane region from air and land.

The itinerary included the following activities:

- Flight seeing tours of the Kluane Region specifically within KNP& R and traditional territory
- ATV tours in the Burwash Uplands located north of Burwash Landing
- Fishing tours of Kluane Lake
- Visit to the Community cultural camp held in Cultus Bay

The Kluane First Nation's 2008 FAM tour was successful in meeting and exceeding our goals and objectives. This project has created the momentum to go forward with the next level of detailed planning to eventually build a tangible tourism product with this leading tour company.

4.0 PURPOSE, GOALS, BENEFITS AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 THE PURPOSE

The purpose of hosting a product development FAM tour is a way of introducing the tour operator to the possible locations where the tour may operate. It will also provide the two parties with the ability to have honest discussions regarding goals and visions for each partner. The outcomes from discussions also generate potential opportunities that could arise in the short-term and long-term as a result of businesses being developed in the region.

During the FAM tour, a tourism operator should have the opportunity to experience activities that can potentially lead to the development of a tourism product or service. These activities can include networking with people, experiencing the local culture, learning about the local history, traditions, and viewing the landscape of the region of focus.

4.2 ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL GOALS

Economic and cultural goals for a FAM tour in the Yukon can include:

- To build capacity within the First Nation; better understanding the tourism industry outside of the Yukon and market expectations of clients of tour operator.
- To create awareness in your community and First Nation on the potential and benefits of tourism development in the area.
- To develop a business partnership with a recognized and leading tour company and to acknowledge the economic benefits that may come with such a venture.
- Grow tourism opportunities in your region or for your First Nation and other stakeholders that meet with market demands and stakeholder values.
- To generate tourism product ideas that will enhance the overall visitation experience of tourists to your region.

4.3 OBJECTIVES

The success of a FAM tour can be measured by its objectives and outcomes which can include:

- The feedback provided by the tour operator regarding the potential product in your area.
- The number of community members that attend the community meetings.
- The number of stakeholders, other than your First Nation that show interest and introduce themselves to the company and engage in tourism discussions (informal or formal).
- The ability to continue discussions and create an action plan for moving forward on the potential tourism product.

4.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To ensure the proper protocol of the FAM tour, the organizers have to develop a framework of guiding principles to assist in planning and implementing the tour. Some guiding principles as a start can be:

- To represent the interest of your First Nation openly, honestly, and with integrity following all cultural protocol.
- To market and promote the growth of Aboriginal Tourism in a manner which maintains the cultural integrity of your First Nation.
- To increase collaboration and creation among First Nations artists and to provide audiences with a place to access and experience the diversity of Yukon First Nations first-hand.
- Ensure equal opportunities for partners and participants throughout the tour.
- Ensure community participation from your First Nation's employees, community members, businesses, elders, and youth.
- Stay committed to the authenticity of First Nation products, services, arts and experiences.
- Respect the importance of individuals their roles in the community.
- Work together to communicate cultural pride and business practice throughout the tour.

4.5 BENEFITS

Aboriginal "experiences" are consistently in demand by visitors. The Aboriginal Culture segment in America represents 12% of the total population or 24 million adults. Having the ability to provide any First Nations cultural information and/or activities adds to the authentic flavour of a trip for many international tourists. Many of your First Nation's traditional stories, language, and traditional skills / knowledge can be passed on to future generations as tourism projects are delivered.

Potential benefits for developing tourism in your community can include:

- The development of several business products and services for individuals within the community to develop.
- New businesses create capacity and market awareness for full-time, part-time and seasonal employment positions for your First Nation members.
- With more businesses concurrently working towards similar goals and objectives, the visitor experience will improve, justifying all marketing campaigns.
- Potential growth year-round tourism products and niche tourism products that meet market demand and reflect Yukon Tourism's values.

5.0 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

5.1 GETTING STARTED WITHIN YOUR COMMUNITY

Successful tourism enterprises to benefit the community require the people of the community to take charge and shape the project to suit their community's needs. Tourism can serve as a vehicle for social and economic development of remote and rural communities.

5.2 BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

External partners can be essential to success by providing smaller communities with business expertise. Building trust and understanding what is important to both the operator and community.

Before venturing any further into a business partnership research and background checks are essential. The internet is a very good resource that can provide information on companies and their operations including their tour programs and services, staff, company background, community involvement and their sustainability practices. Also, try to do a FAM tour of their operations; experience their product as if you were a client. It is important to understand the company and what they offer, this will assist in determining whether you see your community partnering with the company.

When the Kluane First Nation was first approached by the company, we immediately researched the company to gain a better understanding of what they do. It was to our

surprise that they are very well established tourism operator out of Churchill, Manitoba that operates a great number of tourism products across Canada. To further captivate our trust in their company, owners of the company invited a group of Kluane First Nation representatives to their operation in Manitoba to see what it is they do exactly. Going to these extents were necessary to fully understand if the potential tourism operator would be a good match for our First Nation.

5.3 IS A FAM TOUR RIGHT FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?

It is important to understand if a potential tour operator will be suitable for your community. This is a very crucial step that will determine the long-term outcome of your project. Ask yourself:

- 1) Do I want tourists to visit my community and are we able to accommodate the needs of individual tourists and group tours? This may seem like a silly question, but in reality, some communities are not equipped to handle tour buses and large groups of people.
- 2) Are the partners/locals in your community willing to work with you to develop a product development FAM Tour, is there existing product and or businesses and or do you have to create the experience. For example, if you need to go backcountry and there is no company to take your group, an the organizer you need to rent the ATV, hire local guides and determine the route in a safety manner and or a operator might need to offer a discount for larger groups. Providing a complimentary hotel room or discount is still good for the community as a whole because it is bringing positive publicity to the destination and is a win-win situation.

5.4 SET COMMUNITY OBJECTIVES

After completing some initial research and determining if a FAM tour is right for your community, community objectives need to be determined. Below is a list of objectives to give you an idea on where to start, the objectives for your community may need to be different, depending on what type of project you will do.

- What is the community's vision for tourism?
- What outcomes do you want?
- Express social, economic and environmental objectives.
- List ways to measure what you will set out to achieve.

6.0 PRE- FAM TOUR DETAILS

6.1 KEY PEOPLE AND THEIR ROLES

These are some of the people and the roles they will play in order to make a FAM Tour possible:

Community Champions, to organize and promote tourism at the grass-roots level (to work on all areas of the project, from beginning to end). Their role is also to communicate regularly with the company to assist in creating dialogue and building relationships for future opportunities.

The Tour Operator/The Company, they have the business expertise including an established reputation; bring in various international markets, financial capital, and experience.

Chief & Council, is required to endorse the project, to provide land to work with, and to support any initiatives that are required in the development of a partnership.

Community Participants, to engage and understand what the tourism company is all about, and to demonstrate the local culture. It is essential to have a venue where the tour operators can meet and greet the community, and to participate in local traditional First Nations activities.

6.2 LOGISTICS

Establish how your tour operator or potential business partner will make it to your community. Not all people will have the same method of arriving at your FAM tour location. It is important to consider all variables of travel, such as: flights, vehicles, accommodations, meals, fuel, travel times, costs, seasons, and time of year (holidays, events, etc.). Before booking any travel, all details must be pre-arranged and approved by all parties.

6.3 TIMELINES

The Kluane First Nation spent a minimum of two months working on preparing for the FAM tour. The whole process took 8 months to finalize through preliminary planning and continued discussions with company, with both parties settling on a date for the tour, purpose, goals, and objectives.

6.4 BUDGET

Budgets must first be drafted by outlining each step in the project and then listing costs for each individual activity. Your First Nation will need to provide some start-up costs and additional funding can be accessed from a number of Yukon Territorial and Federal Government resources. Also, it is important to keep your costs down, but remain as realistic as possible. Please see appendix A for all financial information required.

7.0 STEPS TO CONDUCTING A FAM TOUR

7.1 Develop an Itinerary

- First determine where you want to take them
- To the community vs specific regions
- Pick a theme
- Consider the weather and accessibility (inform them of what to bring on tour, warm jackets, boots, camera).

7.2 Decide on the duration of the tour

- Number of days and or hours
- How long the tour will take per day
- Prepare for changes of the itinerary – plan for it

7.3 Create the outline of the tour

- Develop an itinerary 3-4 weeks prior to them arriving to include: date, activities and who is participating on the tour
- Prepare for them before arrival

7.7 Conducting the Tour

- Ensure safety of tour and inform them of each day and what to expect
- Enjoy, and take pride of who you are and where you are from

7.8 Follow up

- A few days after the tour follow up with a thank you note and discuss next steps of action.

8.0 RESULTS

8.1 COMMUNITY APPROVAL

The Kluane First Nation's economic development department is utilizing the Chief and Council as much as possible to make decisions on behalf of the community to move projects along. Therefore, the Kluane Corporation met with Chief and Council to explain the current situation of the project and answered all questions that were raised. The objective from this meeting was to only obtain the approval to continue with preliminary planning. The Kluane First Nation's economic development department will of course be presenting the project concepts to the community for their review and approval should any major decisions be required that are beyond the scope of the Chief and Council.

8.2 PROJECT PERFORMANCE

The 2008 Kluane First Nation FAM tour event was well received by both the community and the company; here are some of the results:

- Overall, the tour promoted cultural pride and awareness of interest within the community. This was measured from the very positive feedback received from the company and community.
- The FAM tour facilitated and increased the understanding and recognition of our First Nation culture, economy and community diversity through visitation.
- It was a highly successful example of what is realistic and achievable when collective and collaborative efforts are used to develop and produce First Nation and northern products - on schedule and on budget with high expectations for a quality program.
- Working collaboratively with the Kluane National Park, the company, and Kluane First Nation provided in-depth understanding of opportunities and challenges for each stakeholder.
- The tour has increased the availability and access to the Kluane region including land-base activities and community activities.
- Importantly, capacity development allowed our First Nation to become more involved in the project.

9.0 CHALLENGES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

9.1 TOUR OPERATOR CONCERNS

The company were immediately concerned with land access. They needed to know whether they could operate within area and if not what the steps were to gain access.

Their next concerns were related to the local tourism infrastructure and logistical possibilities. Without a place for tourists to eat, use washrooms, rest, sleep, be entertained, there is less of a possibility for the tour to be marketed effectively. The other concern regarding logistics was discussed to determine how tourists would be arriving at any of the proposed destinations for a tour to take place.

9.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first three concerns that the company had challenges that need to be addressed by Kluane First Nation before the partnership can be realized. All three of these challenges are major projects that will have a term of 3 to 5 years and require proper planning.

The recommendations for each challenge were:

1) **Land Access:**

Continue to meet with all stakeholders to present the ideas and obtain feedback as to what the potential is for developing a general tourism product within specific zones of area. The same type meetings will need to be conducted with the Kluane First Nation leadership at the same time.

2) **Infrastructure:**

Although it is not crucial to have at this point, it will be essential to have tourism infrastructure to grow any tourism products in the future. It is recommended that any tourism infrastructure built will have to address a number of needs identified in an overall tourism strategic plan.

3) **Logistics:**

The company also mentioned a few recommendations to address their concerns with the logistics of getting visitors to the tour destination. This can be addressed and identified through research.

9.3 NEXT STEPS

The next steps for the Kluane First Nation have been identified from the most recent discussions and recommendations from the FAM tour and are:

- 1) Determine the Business Feasibility of all the Tourism Product ideas that were discussed between KFN and the company.
- 2) Continue discussions and complete a plan with all stakeholders for the Kluane region that will identify what types of products, services, infrastructure, and logistics will be most beneficial for tourism within the Kluane region. The Strategy will also identify the regulations and approvals that are required as a start before developing any products.
- 3) Obtain approval from all stakeholders to operate the tour in the specified zones.
- 4) Plan to build the essential infrastructure to host such tourism products based in the Kluane region.
- 5) Closely monitor global tourism trends and be aware of the anticipated market changes in demands and market size. Meet with tourism transportation providers and cruise ship operators once Kluane First Nation is close to launching their tourism ventures with the company.

9.4 Conclusion

The FAM tour was a success meeting and exceeding our goals and objectives. Providing a FAM Tour is a start to a successful relationships and building long lasting economic and cultural benefits to the community and First Nations.

APPEXDIX A:

FINANCIALS