

Squamish Explores Tourism Development through Community Tourism Foundations[®] Program

Squamish stakeholder groups had a key meeting with representatives from Tourism British Columbia and Vancouver Coast & Mountains Tourism Region on February 22, 2006 as part of the Community Tourism Foundations development program offered by Tourism BC.

The purpose of the meeting was to review key components of the local tourism industry, highlight successes and gaps and establish priorities. This meeting served as a fact-finding mission for the Community Tourism Foundations development program and was the first step towards a more comprehensive work plan between Squamish and Tourism BC.

"The information exchanged reinforced all the opportunities that are before us. Clearly, we have the pieces needed to make Squamish a top destination for years to come," commented Squamish Mayor, Ian Sutherland.

In addition to the Mayor and other representatives from the District of Squamish, attendance to the meeting included representatives from the Squamish Sustainability Corporation, Squamish Adventure Centre, BC Centre for Tourism, Leadership and Innovation, Squamish Chamber of Commerce, Visitor Information Centre, Squamish Nation, Squamish Arts Council and the Squamish Town Centre Association. Workshop facilitator Suzanne Denbak was impressed with the outcome, "I am delighted to be working with Tourism BC and the community of Squamish. A dynamic group of people attended our first of many sessions and brought their enthusiasm and insight to the table. I look forward to bringing my background and examples of best practice to Squamish to help them meet their tourism development goals."

The Community Tourism Foundations development program offers a range of tools, proven resources and customized destination development assistance. The program accommodates the needs of communities at different stages of the tourism development process through a step-by-step approach, and aims to work with 20 communities in British Columbia per year. Squamish is the sixth community to have started this process.

"The Squamish Chamber of Commerce is very pleased to be involved in the Squamish Community Tourism Foundations Development Program. The initial meeting with key tourism stakeholders in our community was very productive and we look forward to helping move this important initiative forward. Desired outcomes, such as the establishment of a tourism marketing organization, will not only benefit our tourism partners but the entire Squamish business community," said Kim Stegeman, First Vice President Squamish Chamber of Commerce.

The next steps in the work plan for Squamish will be outlined in recommendations to come from Tourism BC. As Squamish advances through the program, consultation will be required with the community.