



## Tofino, Canada – understanding sustainability issues

### What is the issue?

With many communities now dependent on tourism for their economic livelihood, long-term sustainability through a local, multi-stakeholder process is becoming key for destination management. Tofino, located on Canada's west coast has a population of only 1655 residents but receives thousands of visitors each year. Understanding the current situation in order to manage tourism more sustainably is imperative if destinations are to counter negative impacts.

### What did the researcher do?

The purpose of this research was to examine different stakeholder perspectives of tourism in Tofino in order to determine impacts and challenges relating to tourism development and long-term sustainability. The study determined whether stakeholders were in consensus surrounding future tourism planning or policy development. Semi-structured stakeholder interviews were held with 38 stakeholders in August 2009.

### Why is this research Useful?

This research supports other studies in that the natural appeal of an island, as in any destination, is typically one of its main tourism related assets, yet the natural environment is also the feature most directly threatened by potential overexploitation. Understanding stakeholder's perceptions is vital to community wellbeing as well as cohesive and holistic management approaches.

### What were the outcomes?

Stakeholders were divided about the benefits of tourism. About half felt that tourism, although a good livelihood for tourism business owners, does not give back to the community and the sense of place is in jeopardy. The other half felt that residents do not understand the value of tourism and that tourism provided a much-needed future when fishing and mining ended. Although doing well in terms of tourism numbers, all stakeholders noted that Tofino is limited by land area and is constrained by current infrastructure. All respondents mentioned resource dependency and concluded that although it was needed, there have been little, if any, discussions for more sustainable tourism.

### About the Researcher

Rachel Dodds is an Associate Professor at the Ted Rogers School of Management and her work focuses on sustainable tourism, CSR, islands and tourism policy

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