



The Impacts of Outdoor Recreation in Rural B.C. Communities

A look into
Burns Lake, Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino

A photograph of a person riding a bicycle with a cargo trailer in a grassy field. The person is wearing a blue shirt and a green helmet. The background features a range of snow-capped mountains under a blue sky with white clouds.

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Executive Summary

This report explores the impacts of outdoor recreation for rural communities in British Columbia, namely Burns Lake, Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino. Key insights were developed through a thematic analysis of 25 semi-structured interviews with practitioners such as land managers, economic development officers, and leaders of outdoor recreation groups, among other roles. The interviews explored economic, community, environmental, and equity topics.

The interview data suggests widespread impacts in the communities' outdoor spaces. The communities' outdoor spaces are protected through environmental stewardship efforts such as education, advocacy, and environmental considerations. Outdoor recreation opportunities also help people connect to nature, develop knowledge and skills, engage with Indigenous Peoples, and advance inclusivity and accessibility efforts. However, communities experience environmental and cultural degradation of outdoor spaces caused by outdoor recreation activities when there are insufficient resources for management, planning or other initiatives. Finally, the outdoor recreation sector influences and is influenced by the communities' natural resource values, playing a role in the transition, co-existence, or competition for resources with extractive industries.

The impacts of outdoor recreation are also observed in the communities' economies, cultures, and community infrastructure. Outdoor recreation was described as playing an economic role in most of the communities as a draw for businesses and tourism. It was also described as playing a role in the community culture with regards to lifestyles, wellness, social connectedness, migration, and identity. However, high amounts of visitors and outdoor recreationists also led to strains on local infrastructure that can be hard for the communities to manage.

Alongside the impacts of outdoor recreation, the study highlights challenges. Namely, outdoor recreation when left unplanned, unmonitored, and unmanaged may lead to more negative outcomes and less positive ones. The study stressed the need for increased resources, funding, research, and planning. The study highlights key findings and recommendations with consideration to the interview data and thematic analysis.

The report reflects the state of the outdoor recreation sector in the five communities between October 2022 and November 2022 when the interviews took place. The research does not measure any impacts. Rather, it highlights themes based on the experiences and observations of the interviewees. Further research is required to definitively define and measure impacts.



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Introduction

The Outdoor Recreation Council of BC (ORCBC) is seeking to better understand the impacts of outdoor recreation in rural B.C. communities. At the time of designing this study, there had been limited or outdated research and exploration into the impacts of B.C.'s outdoor recreation sector. This study aims to broadly explore and record the impacts as observed and experienced by the interviewees in the five chosen communities. The initial data suggests that there are significant challenges and opportunities in B.C.'s outdoor recreation sector that merit further discussion and studies.

This project is intended to be used to better understand the impacts of outdoor recreation in rural B.C. communities. It illustrates the inter-connectedness and roles of governments, land managers, businesses, volunteers, residents, and visitors. It shares the positive and negative experiences of the communities. The information in this report may help inform decision makers, provide venues for collaboration, and prepare communities to identify opportunities and address challenges.

The information presented in this report outlines emerging themes from the interviews. It reflects the circumstances and challenges present at the time of the interviews that took place between October 2022 and November 2022. This study does not provide a statistically significant sample or measurable impacts. It was designed to explore the broad, far-reaching, and multi-faceted impacts of outdoor recreation for rural B.C. communities.

Background Research

Prior to conducting this research, ORCBC assessed provincial research needs in 2021 by corresponding with individuals from nearly twenty different organizations, surveying the ORCBC member network, and gathering information on existing and ongoing outdoor recreation research and data collection. Through the outreach process, ORCBC found widespread interest in provincial outdoor recreation research. Three central issues were also identified:

- The provincial understanding of outdoor recreation participation was very limited
- There was limited provincial research to quantify economic and non-market values
- There was no strategic or collaborative approach to collecting provincial research or data

The ORCBC prepared a research proposal recommending a collaborative approach to research and recommended the research start with the collection of participation and economic data with future research for non-market values.

At the time of designing this study, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, and Destination British Columbia were leading new research on outdoor recreation participation and the sector's economic value. As such, this study was designed to further close the B.C. knowledge gap on outdoor recreation research by complementing provincial research efforts, focusing on the local and non-market values of outdoor recreation. This study also served to illustrate the inter-connectedness of the outdoor recreation sector with communities and other sectors.

Objectives

The main objective of this research was to explore the local impacts of outdoor recreation for B.C. communities. The key question this research seeks to broadly answer is **“What are the impacts of outdoor recreation for rural B.C. communities?”**

Secondary project objectives are to

- Continue building knowledge on the outdoor recreation sector in B.C.
- Illustrate local narratives that cannot easily be told through provincial data
- Complement quantitative B.C. outdoor recreation research
- Collect new information or present existing information in a new light
- Inspire discussion and research about the role of outdoor recreation in B.C.
- Illustrate the complexity and depth of the outdoor recreation sector



Methodology

The research is exploratory and qualitative in nature. Interviews (30 minutes to 1 hour) are the main form of data collection. Interviews were conducted primarily with community leaders who could provide perspectives on behalf of community members and who would understand the community's outdoor recreation sector. A thematic analysis of the interviews was used to identify the themes.

Community Selection

There were five communities selected as focus areas: Burns Lake, Squamish, Revelstoke, Tofino, and Fernie. The communities were selected because they have a known outdoor recreation sector. Considerations on population size, geographic region, available outdoor recreation assets and proximity to metropolitan areas were also made to increase the diversity of the communities chosen. Other considerations to enhance the uniqueness of the communities were also included such as the communities' current and historic natural resource use. Additional information about the communities' profiles is in Appendix B.

Metropolitan and urban areas were excluded from the community selection process to limit the scope of the project. Metropolitan areas were defined as census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations¹ as established by Statistics Canada (Statistic Canada, 2022). Communities with populations over 50,000 were also eliminated based on the US Census Bureau's definition of urbanized areas² (US Census Bureau, 2021).

Interviewee Selection

Interviewees were selected to provide broad perspectives on behalf of the community or on behalf of a group in the community. Leadership roles and professional practitioners were especially important to include as they were more likely to have oversight on the sector as opposed to individuals who may be more focused on their personal involvement.

¹ A census metropolitan area has a population of at least 100,000 with at least 50,000 living in the core. A census agglomeration has a population of at least 10,000. Both have other adjacent municipalities that have a high degree of integration with the core population.

² After this study was designed, the US Census Bureau released a new definition for urban areas (Schneider, 2022).

At first, the study aimed to have one interviewee from each community that may fall into the non-profit sector, public sector (such as a local government), Indigenous representation and private sector. However, as the interview process progressed, the key roles within the outdoor recreation sector began to emerge more clearly. The target categories evolved into representatives from

- Local Government
- Economic Development
- Land Management
- Non-Profit
- Indigenous Representation
- Tourism
- Private Sector

Due to time and resource constraints, and the capacity of the interviewees, not every community has a representative from each category. However, every category has two or more representatives in the study overall. Information about who was interviewed in each community is in *Appendix C*.

Interview Process

The interviewees provided information through a pre-interview survey which helped screen interview questions and through the interview itself which ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour.

Before the interview, interviewees were asked to submit a short survey (view *Appendix D*). The survey asked interviewees to identify whether specific impacts took place in their community, and it asked about their comfort level with certain categories. This served to screen interview questions and to identify priority topics for discussion. If an interviewee answered "Yes" to a question in the pre-interview survey question, then they were asked to provide examples or stories during the interview.

The interview questions were designed to address four key areas: economy, community, equity, and environment. The interviews start with general questions to allow interviewees to share top-of-mind topics and then move on to specific questions to probe for examples of different impacts. The interviews are semi-structured. Follow up questions were asked to better understand topics that interviewees brought up.

During the interview, all interviewees were asked about their involvement in the outdoor recreation sector and about the role that the outdoor recreation sector plays in their community. Further questions were used to probe for specific examples and stories of community impacts. Questions were prioritized based on

- Pre-interview survey answers
- Live interview answers (sometimes interviewees had already addressed the topic)
- The interviewees' comfort levels indicated in the pre-interview survey
- The interviewees' role and expertise
- Gaps in information for that community based on previous interviews

Analysis

A thematic analysis of the interview data was conducted. Interviews were transcribed and coded. Emerging themes were identified, and codes were grouped together. The interview data is the main source of data in this study. Secondary studies and sources are mentioned only as they emerged throughout the interview discussions.

A photograph of three people standing in a forest. On the left, a man in a dark jacket and a headband looks towards the right. In the center, a woman in a patterned sweater looks forward. On the right, a woman in a yellow poncho and a wide-brimmed hat looks towards the right. They are standing in front of a wooden signpost. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and green foliage.

Key Findings

The research sought to answer, **“What are the impacts of outdoor recreation for rural B.C. communities?”** by exploring the local impacts in five communities with established outdoor recreation sectors. The research identified positive and negative impacts that are observed in the communities. Other discussions also emerged during the interviews, especially about the barriers and challenges to the sector. There are seven key findings that relate to the results of this study. The detailed impacts and discussions are organized by themes and presented in the *results and discussion* section.

1. Three Similarities in the Outdoor Recreation Sectors

There were three key similarities in all five of the communities that can provide insights about the development of the outdoor recreation sector. The first is the existence of **outdoor assets**. The second is **access** to outdoor assets. The third, are the **people** that access the outdoor spaces. The research revealed how community members in the five communities protect outdoor spaces, create access, and protect access –all of which enables outdoor recreation opportunities and drives people to participate.

The research also revealed that there are observable increases in participation of outdoor recreation. The increases in outdoor recreation participation are at times believed to be accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic or by the promotion of outdoor opportunities. Outdoor recreation participation by visitors was especially discussed in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino. These observed increases in outdoor recreation participation may provide insights on the future growth of the sector for other communities.

2. Negative Impacts Are Primarily Human-Caused and May Be Managed

The negative impacts of outdoor recreation are primarily human caused. The most common concerns were about the degradation of the environment such as wildlife or the destruction of cultural values such as sacred Indigenous sites.

The interview data stressed that there is a right way and a wrong way to do things. From camping, to hiking to trail building—any activity that takes place outdoors is interacting with different values. Values vary by region and site but may include

environmental values like wildlife habitat or cultural values like sacred Indigenous sites. A lack of knowledge about the values can drive their destruction. Similarly, careless behaviours, regardless of knowledge, can lead to their destruction.

The interviews also revealed that people can unintentionally cause damages if the carrying capacity of an outdoor space is surpassed. In other words, outdoor spaces can only handle so many people before they are overused.

Despite the negative impacts of outdoor recreation, the interviews suggested that the impacts may be managed. For one, interviewees described that monitoring and education can lead to a more respectful user base and that limiting the use of areas can address overuse. The ongoing challenge with managing overuse is measuring carrying capacity, having people follow directions set by management, and addressing where people may go instead.

3. The Sector Struggles to Manage Negative Land Impacts

The interview data revealed that there is extensive, intentional development and maintenance of outdoor recreation infrastructure. The key stakeholders involved in the current maintenance and development include land managers, organized outdoor groups often led by volunteers, and in some cases Indigenous communities or destination managers. All the key stakeholders face critical barriers and challenges that affect their capacity to manage the issues. Barriers include limited capacity, limited funding, volunteer burnout, complex issues and processes, limited research and data, and limited planning.

4. The Sector's Organization Provides or Enhances Benefits

The organization of the sector refers to all the groups, clubs, governments, and organizations that are formally and directly involved in providing outdoor recreation opportunities. Their efforts are key to enabling access to outdoor recreation opportunities by permitting access, offering programs, and maintaining or developing outdoor recreation infrastructure. Their efforts enhance outdoor recreation experiences and enable further benefits such as increased inclusivity, Indigenous engagement, environmental stewardship, and development of knowledge and skills.

The study revealed that the benefits of outdoor recreation can extend further into the community. Outdoor recreation opportunities in the communities can also lead to economic activity, social connectedness, community engagement, migration, lifestyle, health and wellness choices, and a sense of community culture and identity.

5. Community Capacity to Address Challenges Is Limited

The challenges from a busy outdoor recreation sector can also extend to the community. The capacity of a small community to keep up with the number of people that want to live and visit the area can be challenging. Concerns that emerged include housing availability and affordability, general affordability, and the strain on community infrastructure such as emergency services, traffic, or sewage.

6. Negative Impacts, Barriers and Challenges Are Threats

The negative impacts of outdoor recreation and the barriers and challenges associated with them are not only a threat to outdoor spaces, but they are also a threat to the community. The outdoor recreation sector extends broadly, and the positive and negative impacts of outdoor recreation are widespread. For instance, environmental stewardship, local economic opportunities, and much of the tourism sector relies on the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities.

7. Collaboration and Coordination Enable Positive Initiatives

Many of the positive initiatives in the outdoor recreation sector included some level of collaboration and coordination between key stakeholders. Recognizing that the sector is interconnected seems to be a key feature of collaborative efforts. Fundraising, knowledge sharing, and partnership agreements are all forms of successful collaborations that enable the success of various positive initiatives and that help stakeholders overcome barriers.



Results and Discussion

The discussion of the interview data is organized by themes highlighting relevant examples from the communities. Please note that not all themes were mentioned for each community. When a community is not mentioned in the report, it simply means that the theme being discussed was not mentioned during the interviews of that community. The theme may exist in the community but may have simply not come up during the interview process.

The discussion of the results is divided into three main sections. First, the *three key elements of outdoor recreation* set the context. Next, the *observable impacts of outdoor recreation* in the communities are outlined. It is followed by a *discussion* section which brings up challenges, opportunities, and unanswered questions.

The Three Key Elements of Outdoor Recreation

The three key elements that are present in every community are access, assets, and people. This section explores how the five communities have easy access to outdoor recreation, what their outdoor recreation assets look like, and the people that participate in outdoor recreation.

1. Easy Access to Outdoor Recreation “Right Out the Door”

A common sentiment that appeared in all five communities was that they have easy access to outdoor recreation “right out the door.” This sentiment was described in similar ways in interviews from all communities. Common descriptions included:

- Easy access or being accessible
- Stepping out the door and being on the trail, in nature, at a park, etc.
- Five minutes from here
- Trails all over
- Surrounded by outdoor recreation

“We have camping right out our backdoor. Fishing right out our backdoor. We’ve got hiking trails, mountain biking, four wheeling, dirt biking, all sorts of different activities that you can do less than a 5 minute drive from downtown.”

Nicole Gerow, Board Member of Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, Rod & Gun Club, and Search and Rescue, Band Member of Ts’il Kaz Koh First Nation

"Incredible access to nature. You can feel it everywhere you are. At every point in Squamish, you can access a trail right out your door. Even in the downtown corridor you can be in the estuary in a few minutes."

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

"You step out the door here and you are on the trail."

Melanie Wrigglesworth, Executive Director of Fernie Trails Alliance

"In summer people increasingly come to mountain bike and to hike and explore Mount Revelstoke National Park and Glacier National Park right on our doorstep."

Robyn Goldsmith, Destination and Sustainability Manager of Tourism Revelstoke, Volunteer Board Member of Revelstoke Cycling Association, Volunteer Race Organizer of Revelstoke Women's Enduro, Mountain Bike Coach

"People who come here come because they love the beaches, oceans, forests, surfing, kayaking. Outdoor recreation is part of their life."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

The interviewees' descriptions suggest that outdoor recreation spaces in the communities are accessible, in proximity and plentiful. This data confirms the presence of the outdoor recreation sector in the five communities and illustrates one side of the communities' relationship to outdoor recreation.

2. Similarities and Difference in Outdoor Recreation Assets

Interviewees described how the communities are used as a hub to access outdoor recreation assets available inside and outside of the communities' official boundaries. Trails were mentioned in every community. They serve as access points for outdoor recreation activities like climbing or water-based sports and as the primary location of outdoor recreation activities like Nordic skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking, hiking, and motorized activities.

Each community also seems to have unique outdoor recreation offerings. Upon completion of the interviews, there were specific offerings that stood out for each community that are illustrated below in *Table 1*. The table is not a comprehensive list of what is available in each community but is meant to highlight some of the different opportunities mentioned. In fact, when speaking about the outdoor recreation offerings in their communities, interviewees would often list a handful of activities before commenting something like "the list goes on and on."

Table 1: Community Outdoor Recreation Activities (Not Comprehensive)

Community	Assets	Activities
Burns Lake	Lakes and trails	Fishing, hunting, mountain biking, snowmobiling, canoeing, boating, motorized use, camping
Fernie	Ski resort, Elk River, and trails	Fishing, cliff jumping, hiking, mountain biking, camping
Revelstoke	Ski resort, national parks, and trails	Heli-skiing, snowmobiling, Nordic skiing, mountain biking
Squamish	Trails, climbing areas, rivers, ocean	Mountain biking, climbing, wind sports, hiking
Tofino	Ocean, beaches, trails	Surfing, camping, hiking, boating, cycling

Additional information on outdoor recreation assets for each community is available in *Appendix B* which lists specific outdoor recreation offerings like official recreation sites and trails, provincial parks, and national parks that are located near each community.

3. People Accessing Outdoor Recreation Assets

Before discussing the impacts of outdoor recreation, it is important to mention people as they play an important role in how access and assets are created, protected, or damaged. Notably, communities seem to be experiencing a growing number of people accessing outdoor recreation assets through outdoor recreation activities. The interviews suggest that the communities experienced growth in outdoor recreation participation and in the cases of Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino the growth was accelerated by tourism promotion.

Interviewees in every community observed an acceleration in the growth of outdoor recreation participation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This sudden and unplanned spike in outdoor recreation participation provides this report with a unique perspective to understanding the impacts of outdoor recreation as the growing participation exacerbated or brought to light challenges and issues.

"I've noticed an influx in the number of people who have gotten out and gone on the hiking trails and have gotten into mountain biking. Especially in the past couple of years when they weren't able to go anywhere."

Nicole Gerow, Board Member of Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, Rod & Gun Club, and Search and Rescue, Band Member of Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation

"Our area had already seen an increase in outdoor recreation, but during COVID-19 the number of recreators increased significantly."

Cat Moffat, Economic Development Coordinator of City of Revelstoke

“There is that threshold of something going from positive into negative. I feel like we are there in Squamish. In the last 6 years, and especially with COVID-19, we have had that problem. COVID-19 just showed it more blatantly.”

Anonymous

The Impacts of Outdoor Recreation

The impacts explored are those discussed and observed by the interviewees. This study frames the impacts of outdoor recreation as that which takes place on the land (in outdoor spaces) and in the community.

Land Impacts

“Land impacts” refers to impacts in outdoor spaces or that are closely related to the outdoors. In other word, the themes in this section are directly related to outdoor spaces.

1. Human-Caused Damages to the Land and Its Values

When people participate in outdoor recreation activities they can intentionally or unknowingly cause damages to the areas they are entering. The interviews suggest more outdoor recreation participants are linked to more frequent or apparent damages. *Table 2* outlines the types of human-caused damages that emerged during the interviews and are discussed in this section.

Table 2: Human-Cause Damages Discussed in Interviews

	Burns Lake	Fernie	Revelstoke	Squamish	Tofino
Wildlife impacts	•	•	•	•	•
Garbage, litter, waste	•	•	•	•	•
Trail erosion	•	•	•	•	
Unsanctioned trails			•	•	
Dispersed or illegal camping & van life		•		•	•
Sacred, cultural areas				•	•
Disrespect, lack of knowledges	•	•	•	•	•
Overuse or over tourism		•	•	•	•
Closures		•	•	•	•
Social media		•	•		
Wildfire concerns				•	•

In Squamish and the Sea-to-Sky corridor this sort of impact is described as “loving it to death: The term “Loving it to Death” is also part of a marketing campaign in the Sea-to-Sky corridor that encourages outdoor recreation participants to be mindful and respectful of the areas they visit. The campaign was supported by local governments, tourism agencies, and organizations that advocate for responsible recreation.

1.1. Disrespect and Lack of Knowledge

The most common cause of damages to the land that was discussed was disrespect and lack of knowledge. The five communities experience varying degrees of disrespect to outdoor spaces or a lack of knowledge about how to respectfully behave in outdoor spaces. The two are presented together because it can be unclear whether users are intentionally disrespecting areas or are unknowingly disrespecting areas. Regardless of the intention, the communities experience the deterioration of their outdoor spaces.

“The community is working hard to ensure protection of our natural assets. One way is by educating visitors to our region. During COVID-19, many day visitors did visit our region, while many respected our community, we did face challenges with the behaviour of some visitors, which resulted in increased wildlife conflict, emergency response requirements, etc.”

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

“Visitors in terms of outdoor recreation may not be respecting sacred Indigenous sites due to a lack of knowledge.”

Anonymous

1.2. Overuse or Over-Tourism

Another commonly discussed cause of damages to the land base is overuse or over-tourism. For simplicity, overuse will encompass both overuse and over-tourism in this report. Overuse is a result of too many users entering an area leading to damages. In comparison to disrespectful use, overuse only causes damages through too many people as opposed to individual action. Overuse was mentioned in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino.

“The worst environmental damage is the slow creep of overuse and that no one sees themselves as directly accountable. At Boulder Mountain for instance, the road is really suffering from more and more vehicles.”

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

1.3. Garbage, Litter, Human Waste

Garbage, litter, and human waste left behind by outdoor users was extensively discussed in the interviews. In Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino there is a general acknowledgement that this is a problem and there are discussions or initiatives that are attempting to address the problem.

"There are significant challenges with all aspects of managing people. From trail development to human waste and garbage, to the blatant disregard that some people have for being in a community. Even when you talk to them through signage they don't care. Would you drive to somebody's house and throw your garbage on their lawn? Probably not. So why would you do it here?"

Anonymous

In Burns Lake, garbage was mentioned in passing twice and was accompanied by comments about how other users may pick up after those that do not.

"There's always someone that leaves a bag of garbage here and there, but it gets cleaned up."

Anonymous

1.4. Wildlife Impacts

Wildlife impacts were also extensively discussed. In Burns Lake, the only wildlife impact mentioned was a concern for caribou migration and high elevation snowmobiling. However, it was mentioned that there was no data to support the concerns; only reports from people and conversations. It was expressed that without data, the concerns cannot be verified, and management decisions cannot be made.

In Revelstoke, users entering sensitive habitat and impacting wildlife were discussed generally without specific mentions of species or areas at risk. Impacts on caribou migration were specifically discussed. In this case, the concerns led to the closure of certain areas.

"There are closures that have been implemented by the province to make sure that sledders don't go in and harass the caribou that are still there. It's not just sledding itself. It's the linear features that are created by logging and forestry that sledders will use that create a packed trail where the wolves will come in and impact the caribou."

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development of City of Revelstoke

Concerns over wildlife impacts were also discussed in Fernie. Interviewees discussed the importance of having data to understand wildlife impacts because of human movement. For instance, they raised the question of how many people can enter an area

before it begins to impact wildlife movement? And at what point does that movement become detrimental to the wildlife? Interviewees acknowledged that research is taking pace to better understand those impacts. Interviewees specifically spoke to grizzly bears, mountain goats, and sheep that have sensitive habitat near outdoor recreation areas.

"There is important grizzly bear or mountain goat habitat, and both those animals are sensitive to people, so we have set up studies to measure whether those animals are being displaced when large numbers of people come by and trying to establish thresholds for that."

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

"Destination photography, such as flying a wedding party to the top of a mountain to get the best photo, is something that is happening more and more. We don't have tenures or licenses for it, and it could be happening in grizzly bear, goat or sheep habitat. What impacts are those flights having?"

Lisa Cox, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Rocky Mountain South District

Human-wildlife conflicts between bears and people are also a concern in Squamish. It was discussed that outdoor recreation participants were not storing food properly, feeding bears, and even taking photos with bears. This led to food habituated bears that led to the closures of Garibaldi South and Taylor Meadows. There is an intention-action gap where people say they want to protect wildlife but do not take the necessary precautions to do so. The public then becomes upset when as a result of irresponsible outdoor recreation, areas are closed, or animals are put down.

"People give us grief for putting down bears, but they leave us no choice when the bear becomes habituated. When you try to get people to fix their behaviour there is a lack of recreation accountability for their impact and the causation of these problems. We call them human-wildlife conflicts and are a result of irresponsible people. They say, "don't put down this bear, I'm sorry." But it's too late. What do we do?"

Anonymous

In Tofino, concerns about wildlife conflicts emerged with regards to having too many people disposing of food and human waste in the backcountry which can attract animals, creating human-wildlife conflicts that can lead to closures or animals being put down.

"I find that one of the things that is hard to manage is even throwing out biodegradables. It feels like the right thing to do. You are taught to do that but if every user is doing that roadside where they are camping or illegal camping, then that is going to attract mice, raccoons, and then it's going to attract wolves and cougars and bears. And then the area is not usable anymore for recreation or we are putting down animals, putting down predators to manage the poor practices."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

1.5. Trail Erosion

Trail erosion was spoken about in Fernie, Revelstoke, and Squamish. It was mostly spoken about in the context of overuse; that is more users leading to trail erosion. However, it was also discussed in the context of climate change and logging that could make it worse. For example, the November 2021 atmospheric river in Fernie was an event that was described as causing damage to trails.

"With climate change, we are having more droughts in the summer. As more people use the trail, the soil is displaced. In wet conditions, more use leads to more environmental damage like trail braiding or drainage issues."

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

1.6. Unsanctioned Trails

Unsanctioned (illegal) trail building was discussed in Revelstoke and Squamish. "What is the big deal with building trails anywhere?" is a sentiment that interviewees described encountering. It can be difficult for outdoor recreation participants to understand the importance of authorization processes to protect environmental or Indigenous values that may not be apparent at first glance.

"It is difficult because a well-built trail that has taken its time and is done with long-term maintenance in mind is not the same as someone who has built over a sensitive environmental habitat or has not sought the approval of their local First Nations. There is a wrong way and a right way to do it."

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

"We are very aware that there is a huge demand for outdoor recreation on undeveloped, open areas of Crown land. This is a constant challenge and unauthorized trail development in my district has the potential to significantly impact Indigenous land values and the resource values identified under the Forest and Range Practices Act."

Luke Clarke, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Sunshine Coast - South Island District

"Sometimes people seeking a new adventure will cut new trails that tend to be steep and unsustainable. Sometimes these activities can lead to environmental degradation and problems for the groups that manage those activities."

Matt Parker, President of Squamish Trails Society

"What is really frustrating to me now is that I totally get that people want trails and they think that it is just vacant Crown land. What's the big deal? I know that the big deal is they shouldn't be doing it without consulting Indigenous groups. It seems offensive to me that they don't realize that."

Anonymous

1.7. Sacred and Cultural Indigenous Areas

Traditional Indigenous values, and sacred and cultural Indigenous areas are ever present in B.C.'s outdoor spaces. This section will only discuss how outdoor recreationists interact with sacred and cultural Indigenous areas. These types of interactions were only discussed in Tofino and Squamish but that does not mean that they do not exist in the other communities.

Tla-o-qui-aht Nation (Tofino) is facing direct negative impacts to sacred areas caused by outdoor recreation. For instance, it was described how bones and artifacts were taken one by one from a cave in the backcountry after a hut for hikers had been built. The hut was built 10 years ago, and the builders did not realize it was going to cause that sort of impact.

"We have a cave up in one of the mountains and this industry directly led to all of these bones and artifacts being taken one by one over time. Now we are trying to get a helicopter up to measure the cave, to get an engineer to design a gate that we can fabricate and install to gate it and protect it and put a lock on the gate that the guardians have keys for. We will be asking the helicopter to donate its time and the Alpine Club to fundraise to help get that done. It is a direct impact from outdoor recreation."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

In Squamish, we did not have the opportunity to speak to the Squamish Nation or a representative. We heard about the sacred and cultural areas from the perspective of non-indigenous people. It was specifically mentioned that Murrin Provincial Park, Shannon Falls, and the Chief are areas of cultural and significant importance to the Squamish Nation. As more focus is placed on Indigenous culture and knowledge, there may be shifts in how outdoor recreation interacts with outdoor spaces. For instance, new archeological and environmental work can lead to the re-evaluation of access strategies.

1.8. Dispersed or Illegal Camping and Van Life

In Squamish and Tofino, interviewees expressed concerns over the growing numbers of people that are participating in dispersed or illegal camping and van life. Interviewees described in both communities that a contributing factor to this issue is that housing and campsites are not available or unaffordable so people resort to staying where they can. This leads to safety concerns over people parking and camping on forest service roads and concerns about people leaving garbage and human waste behind since there is no infrastructure to support disposal.

"It's become its own thing where living in a van is the lifestyle. It used to be that people lived in vans to be able to climb. Because of the huge influx of people and because of the way Squamish is changing, there has been a kickback over the last 4 or 5 years about people camping in vans, parking on forest service roads. People think because it is Crown land, they can do whatever they want but it also happens within district boundaries. There's been all this conflict. It's not just climbers now. It's mountain bikers too. There is still the core community of residents and long-term community members that kind of live and work in town that are being lumped together and are getting villainized in the same way as the masses that come in the summer."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

1.9. Wildfire Concerns

Wildfire concerns were mentioned in Squamish and in Tofino. The main concern was with regards to people coming in and lighting fires that can fuel forest fires despite warnings against them.

"The other one is clearly communicating what are the options for fires - fire warnings. They are incredibly scary for First Nations. It doesn't feel like the message is always received. People feel like it's okay to always have a little fire on the gravel road in the backcountry. But we would rather not have them rolling that dice."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

1.9. Closures

The closure of outdoor spaces was discussed for three communities. In Tofino and Squamish, closures of outdoor spaces were mentioned as a response to the pandemic to limit the number of visitors coming, limit the strain they would cause on the local infrastructure (especially for Indigenous communities), and protect the safety of residents. Interviewees also mentioned that Revelstoke, Fernie, and Squamish have all closed outdoor recreation spaces to limit environmental impacts. Notably, the effectiveness of closures was brought into question because outdoor recreationists do not always respect them.

"The other one I would say is where there are wildlife closures and people want to recreate in those areas. Those are usually unmanaged areas, and they cause impacts on wildlife that are hard for enforcement to manage."

Anonymous

"During COVID-19, parks were closed but people would still come. They wanted to go somewhere but did not know where to go."

Anonymous

1.10. Social Media Influence

Interviewees commented that people were motivated to participate in outdoor recreation activities because of something they had seen on social media or because they wanted to get a photo or video. Specifically mentioned were people taking pictures with bears in Squamish and misusing trails in Fernie. These incidents were not discussed extensively but may merit further research to understand if it is a widespread or growing problem.

"The influence of social media on sites and trails is a conversation that we are having more and more with partner groups and with people that are coming in for authorizations. With social media, the pressure on the land increases."

Lisa Cox, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Rocky Mountain South District

2. Connection to Nature

Participation in outdoor recreation can also lead to positive outcomes. The interview data suggests that outdoor recreationists form connections to the outdoors which can be personally meaningful and can motivate further engagement in responsible recreation, stewardship, and education.

Throughout the interviews most interviewees described a personal experience of being outside. They were often illustrating the personal health and wellness benefits they have seen and experienced, or they were illustrating the value of the outdoors. Interviewees spoke about people's attachment to places, and about the emotional and wellness experiences that take place outside. Topics that were mentioned include

- Personal enjoyment
- Happiness
- Appreciation for and description of nature
- Feeling better after an outdoor experience
- Attachment to places and experiences
- Mental and health benefits
- Emotional well-being such as stress-release, coping mechanism, and healing experiences

"There is really a deep meaning behind the positive aspects of outdoor recreation for health and what that can provide. It really is quite therapeutic and personal and can mean a lot to people but in the past, it hasn't necessarily been framed in a way that we can talk about it like that. I definitely feel that strong reactions come from facing the loss of something that is important to physical and emotional well-being."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

"I know I feel way better when I am outdoors and recreating. It's just nice to go out there and go fishing and listen to the waves hitting the side of the boat. Getting to go even for a scenic drive down the backroad, seeing the wildlife and just getting out amongst the trees. It's calming and grounding."

Nicole Gerow, Board Member of Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, Rod & Gun Club, and Search and Rescue, Band Member of Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation

3. Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is connected to outdoor recreation in two ways. The first is directly linked to outdoor recreation as it concerns protecting outdoor recreation spaces from human-caused damages (illustrated in the previous section) or from external forces such as resource extraction that would change the landscape or experience. The second is an indirect link where the protection of environmental values can facilitate new outdoor opportunities in the future. For example, if a stream is protected from development, it may later serve as a spot for recreational fishing.

There is active environmental stewardship directly linked to outdoor recreation in all five of the communities. *Table 3* provides an overview of the different ways environmental stewardship was discussed in the communities.

Table 3: Environmental Stewardship Effort Discussed in Interviews

	Burns Lake	Fernie	Revelstoke	Squamish	Tofino
Indigenous Environmental Stewardship	•				•
Environmental Standards and Authorizations	•	•	•	•	•
Community Stewards	•	•	•	•	•
Environmental Advocacy	•	•	•	•	•
Promoting Responsible Recreation	•	•	•	•	•
Volunteers	•	•	•	•	
Tourism		•	•	•	•
Research		•			
Forest Fire Mitigation	•				

3.1. Indigenous Environmental Stewardship

Indigenous Peoples have been stewarding the land currently known as British Columbia for thousands of years. It is thanks to Indigenous Peoples that we are still able to enjoy many of the natural landscapes and outdoor spaces in the province. Indigenous Peoples continue to hold an important role in environmental stewardship. The role of Indigenous peoples in environmental stewardship was most directly and extensively discussed in Burns Lake and Tofino during the interviews. Indigenous environmental stewardship likely takes place in the other communities, but it was not as extensively discussed. As such, only Tofino and Burns Lake are addressed in this section. However, Indigenous consultation was extensively discussed in all five communities and the role of Indigenous Peoples in the outdoor recreation is explored more in depth in the *Indigenous Involvement* section as it relates to topics beyond the environment.

Different Indigenous communities hold consultation rights in B.C. communities. The consultation process is about Indigenous interests which is not limited to environmental interests, but they can be a part of it. For example, in Burns Lake Indigenous Peoples of the area had recently attended a water stewardship session.

In Tofino, the Indigenous Peoples have led environmental movements like the 90s “War in the Woods”³ to protect old growth forests. Currently there is active stewardship through the Tribal Park’s Guardian program. The guardians monitor and protect the environmental and cultural values in outdoor spaces on their territory.

“The tribal park is expressed as a declaration over our whole territory. Mountain tops to ocean floors. Each tribal park is a management unit. Meares Island (Wah-nuh-jus - Hilt-hoo-is), Kennedy Lake (Ha`uukmin) and the other watersheds (Tranquil Tribal Park, Esowista Tribal Park). Our guardians have been expressed as monitoring and implementing our land visions for tribal parks since 2008. They are our watchmen on the land, trained in wilderness first aid, stream keepers, environmental monitoring, some of them are trained for salmon hatchery technicians working with our hatchery program.”

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

3.2. Environmental Standards and Authorization

Environmental standards and authorizations help ensure that outdoor spaces are developed and maintained in a way that benefits or protects the environment. Interviewees mostly spoke about trail authorization processes that are managed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC or by BC Parks. The officers working in either of these organizations play an important role in ensuring that environmental standards are met. Through the authorization process, they receive information about environmental values and concerns that they pass on to those working on outdoor recreation projects. Often, those actively working on outdoor recreation projects are volunteers from a non-profit organization.

“In the Recreation Sites and Trails BC authorization process for say a new trail construction, there is other legislation that is potentially impacted by that authorization. For example, government ecosystems staff may want to make sure that the federal migratory bird act is met if there is a bird nest in the sensitive period nearby. That will be included as a condition in the authorization. Recreation Sites and Trails BC staff is basically passing on the message that there are other considerations related to wildlife that need to be considered when building the trail. It is usually groups learning about a different piece of legislation that Recreation Sites and Trails BC is not directly responsible for, but it is interlinked with the authorization.”

Anonymous

³ The 1984 Meares Island court case and the 90s “War in the Woods” are discussed in detail in section 7.3. *Transitioning Resource Values*.

The outdoor groups that conduct outdoor recreation projects also play an important role in ensuring that environmental standards are met. For example, when responsibly building a trail, they will work with the land manager (often Recreation Sites and Trails BC or BC Parks) and follow the authorization process. These groups may also work with qualified environmental professionals to further ensure environmental protection.

"Consulting with a qualified environmental professional is one of the first steps I would advise any group to take because they will know all of the regulations with respect to working around water. Your good intentions can be completely undermined if you are not moving forward in an informed manner. So, getting permission from land managers and working with qualified environmental professionals is the way to go. Bringing experienced minds together for a project is very helpful so that you can proceed in a manner that is positive for the environment."

Matt Parker, President of Squamish Trails Society

3.3. Community Stewards

The interviews also highlighted environmental stewardship done by community members. On an individual level, involvement in outdoor recreation can lead to environmental awareness, mindedness, or action. These impacts seem to be further enhanced as outdoor recreationists join groups where the learning of environmental topics may be increased and where organized processes to voice concerns and act may be available. For instance, outdoor recreationists at an individual level may help pick up after users, whereas on a group level they may participate in organized clean ups, raise issues with local or provincial authorities or develop programs to address the concerns.

"In Tofino's case, personal involvement in outdoor recreation often directly leads to an increased desire to save the environment."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

3.4. Environmental Advocacy

Outdoor recreationists become involved in environmental advocacy, voicing concerns about outdoor spaces and their values. Interviewees in all five communities expressed that there are outdoor recreationists in their communities who are engaged citizens that voice concerns and may participate in political processes.

"In 2008 there was the "Save the Plunge" campaign. There was a popular local trail in a large cut block. SORCA went to various levels of government to get a tree corridor that wasn't cut so that it kept the same riding experience. After lobbying the government, we realized that the cut block was also in a watershed for Squamish. The District of Squamish was able to get behind us and we came to a compromise that saved the trail and did not jeopardize the town's drinking water."

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

Additionally, outdoor recreationists can be a mechanism for environmental monitoring. People that frequent outdoor spaces may become familiar with the environment and wildlife in the area. With the right knowledge they may be able to report observations and concerns.

3.5. Promoting Responsible Recreation

As was described in the *human-caused damages* section, outdoor recreationists can damage outdoor spaces. One of the most mentioned factors leading to damage was a lack of knowledge. However, organized and knowledgeable outdoor recreation groups play an important role in counterbalancing some of those impacts by educating users and engaging in stewardship activities. In all five of the communities, there are organizations that are promoting responsible recreation practices.

"The snowmobile club promotes staying away from sensitive areas like marshes and not bogging through creeks and lakes. It promotes picking up your garbage. Pack in, pack out."

Nicole Gerow, Board Member of Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, Rod & Gun Club, and Search and Rescue, Band Member of Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation

In Tofino, the Tribal Park's guardians monitoring and education efforts have resulted in an observable difference in the behaviour of outdoor recreation participants.

"This year we spent a more aggressive time out in the summer every day in the backcountry letting them know that we are monitoring them. There was a massive reduction in the number of users, and it led to a more respectful user group."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

3.6. Volunteers

Volunteer outdoor recreationists were recognized as a key part of the sector in Burns Lake, Fernie, Revelstoke, and Squamish. They are often the ones actively managing the land by carrying out projects that maintain and develop outdoor recreation infrastructure. Without them, much of the infrastructure would not be available or would be in worse

condition. They are a key part of environmental stewardship as the ones working on the land.

"We can't manage the public land properly without the sector partnering with us. The Ministry is quite reliant on the presence of an outdoor recreation sector. By that I mean organizations on a community level, but also provincially like the Outdoor Recreation Council of BC, to do the local work on the ground, outside of government, in an advocacy role and in a stewardship role. The local groups do the hard work. They do the maintenance of the trails in Revelstoke and the campsites. Without them we couldn't have the infrastructure and the resources that are there. It's a key role."

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

"Squamish residents have an amazing track record of volunteerism, and we hope that with Squamish's current rate of growth, this will remain as strong."

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

"We have Wednesday night work bees that start in May and finish in September. Every Wednesday we have twenty to forty people show up to be a part of the work bee. It is great. It is 45 minutes to an hour, and then we all go ride. We have little kids to people my age and older showing up and just having fun."

Patti Dube, President of Ride Burns, PE Teacher of Lakes District Secondary, Coach and Instructor of various outdoor recreation activities

3.7. Tourism

Tourism can also play a role in environmental stewardship. Destination management includes environmental stewardship and takes place in Fernie, Revelstoke, and Squamish. Destination management is discussed in depth in its own section (*8. Destination Marketing and Management*). In Tofino, stewardship tourism was described as a form of environmental stewardship that takes place in the tourism sector.

"They call it stewardship tourism. You go on vacation but one of the days you do a clean up for instance. It is about going somewhere but also feeling like you have done something good for the community that you have visited."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

3.8. Research

Research can play a role in environmental stewardship. By helping develop an understanding of environmental impacts, it can help managers make well informed decisions. There was little mention of active research taking place in the province apart from Fernie's *AmbassadorWILD* program that is researching, monitoring and educating.

"For wildlife movement there's currently only one other study like the one that we are doing that tries to establish whether the wildlife is moving away based on the volume of people."

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

3.9. Forest Fire Mitigation

An interviewee in Burns Lake described how the building of trails can help fight forest fires. It was described how trails have helped reduce forest fire fuels by creating natural fire ways. They also help provide faster and easier access to wild firefighters as they don't have to cut their own trail or get Heli-dropped in if there is already a nearby trail network.

"The snowmobile trail is cut out to be 30 metres wide when we first develop it so then we have a 30-metre-wide slough of trail through the timber and the brush. For the first few years the whole thing is brushed out and then we slowly cut out to a 10-metre break. You are still going to have many of the trees along the edges that are not quite tall enough to go all the way across the trail. Unless the fire is in the Crown of the trees, it's going to hit a fuel free barrier going along the ground where the tire tracks are from both ATV use or mountain biking. That helps rank 1 and rank 2 fires not make as much progression because they are running out of fuel. If a second growth brush happens to fall over, the chances of it falling over and catching the other side of the trail is less likely just because it hasn't had the time to grow that tall."

Nicole Gerow, Board Member of Burns Lake Snowmobile Club, Rod & Gun Club, and Search and Rescue, Band Member of Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation

4. Knowledge and Skills

Participation in outdoor recreation or the existence of an outdoor recreation sector opens new learning opportunities. Outdoor recreation activities can help teach people personal skills such as developing better physical awareness. The depth of learning is more significant as people interact with other experienced outdoor recreationists, join clubs or associations, participate in events and formal education programs, join trail building workshops, volunteer for clean ups, or become leaders of local groups.

"We have seen a lot of that change in a positive way. The more people use an outdoor recreation resource, the more respectful they are and more cognisant of their impacts on the trail."

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

The interviewees described how opportunities to become more involved in the outdoor recreation sector can teach people about

- Safety
- Sustainable trail building
- Physical skills
- Wildlife and the environment
- Responsible recreation practices
- Land management
- Reconciliation
- Collaborative planning
- Fundraising
- Communications
- Advocacy and government relations.

Specific learning opportunities described in the interviews are listed in *Appendix E*.

"That is what is so amazing about this place is that everyone is so willing to help. They will give you guidance like checking if you have done avalanche safety courses before backcountry skiing and checking that you have the skills. There are community members that are actively making sure that you understand the risks and are keeping yourself safe."

Robyn Peel, Community Economic Development Coordinator of Community Futures East Kootenay

"On the sustainability side, there is learning how to build trails, dealing with appropriate concerns, building well-built trails near sensitive areas, and maintaining trails without damaging the area".

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

5. Inclusivity and Accessibility

In all five communities, there are initiatives geared towards inclusivity and accessibility.

Accessibility initiatives that were typically mentioned were accessible outdoor spaces such as adaptive trails or accessible camping. In Squamish, Revelstoke, and Fernie there were specific mentions of societies dedicated to adaptive outdoor sports. *Appendix F* contains a full list of initiatives mentioned that help increase physical accessibility.

Inclusivity initiatives include those that encourage underrepresented groups to participate in outdoor recreation and help remove barriers. Underrepresented groups include women, people with disabilities, racialized minorities, LGBTQ2+ individuals, low-income individuals, or other marginalized groups. These initiatives most commonly included groups and programs catered towards the underrepresented groups such as women only events or programs for Indigenous youth. *Appendix G* contains a full list of initiatives mentioned that are geared towards underrepresented groups.

When speaking about inclusivity and accessibility there was an expression of the community being able to do more. This was often as a desire for more inclusivity and accessibility initiatives or as a reflection of this being a new and growing space. In both cases, it was expressed that there are more opportunities to work on inclusivity and accessibility. This was a common sentiment that was expressed in every community.

“There is an opportunity to be good stewards for recreation and for the environment and GBA+. Opening up equal opportunities for more people. In my dream world that would be a lot better in the future.”

Anonymous

6. Indigenous Involvement

In all five communities there were examples of involvement from Indigenous Peoples in the outdoor recreation sector. The involvement of Indigenous Peoples in outdoor recreation is unique in each community. It may include relationship building between a Nation and an organization or government, Indigenous led projects, participation in outdoor recreation, or consultations.

6.1. Indigenous Consultation

There are statutory consultation requirements for certain outdoor recreation projects on Crown land that are commonly overseen by Recreation Sites and Trails BC and BC Parks whereby Indigenous Peoples may input on outdoor recreation projects that take place on their territories through the consultation process. These relationships are typically considered government to government relationships. The relationships can exist beyond the consultation process.

“Our relationship with Indigenous Nations goes beyond our basic constitutional requirements for consultation. We work very closely with First Nations to make sure that their land interests are met and do the best with the capacity we have to include Indigenous communities in the work and decision making at our recreation sites and trails. Indigenous relations and reconciliation are a significant component to all aspects of our work in the South Island-Sunshine Coast District and our relationship with individual Nations in our district is continually evolving every year.”

Luke Clarke, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Sunshine Coast - South Island District

The interviews mostly spoke about consultations from the provincial government. However, consultations and agreements are also taking place with other levels of government including local governments and the federal government.

6.2. Unique Relationships

The interviewees described how relationships with First Nations are unique and can be complex. Every Nation is different and has different interests and needs. The complexity and uniqueness of the relationships are also illustrated by the initiatives that are taking place in each community. Not only are the communities each at a different place in reconciliation processes and Indigenous relationship building, but different organizations and people also carry different levels of understanding and involvement.

“Our relationship with each Nation is unique depending on various Government to Government agreements, treaties, or specific land interests of Nations and there is no generic way that we work with First Nations in our district.”

Luke Clarke, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Sunshine Coast - South Island District

Regardless of the amount of involvement, every community expressed interest in more involvement. The interview data suggest that relationships are emerging, evolving, growing, or being fostered.

Burns Lake

Indigenous involvement was described through participation in outdoor activities. It was mentioned that 50% or more of the attendees to the snowmobile club events are of Indigenous heritage, that a good percentage of people participating in hunting and fishing are Indigenous, that many fishing derbies are Indigenous led, and that the local Bands visit the local outdoor recreation store for supplies for outdoor events.

There were also several initiatives mentioned in Burns Lake. Examples include

- Partnerships between the community forest and First Nations, including funding from the community forest to the First Nations (some of which would likely going to outdoor recreation)
- The local college working with the Burns Lake Native Development Corporation, which represents six First Nations, to offer an adventure tourism program
- Plans for Indigenous art to be installed in mountain biking trails in 2023
- Interest in a collaborative tourism amenity project to connect the bike park and downtown through a trail
- Spirit North offering Indigenous youth outdoor recreation opportunities

"Historically, relationships with First Nations have been very strained and we are still seeking ways to work well together. To have the First Nations interested in working with the village on tourism and outdoor recreation projects, is very exciting. It is great that outdoor recreation is something that is bringing us together."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

Fernie and Revelstoke

Indigenous involvement in Fernie and Revelstoke was spoken about less frequently than in the other communities. Fernie interviewees pointed to on the ground signage and information projects with the Ktunaxa Nation. Revelstoke interviewees mentioned the City of Revelstoke had recently hired an Indigenous liaison and a push for outdoor education in town including an Indigenous outdoor education program. Overall, interviewees described Indigenous involvement in both communities to be in the early stages.

"We are just at the beginning point and we are trying to figure out what that looks like. It's early days."

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development of City of Revelstoke

"It's an interesting process. It has taken some time. When I first started, I had been trying to reach out and call every week, but I know that they are busy. I finally got a response last week, so I was pretty excited. They are building some new trails out on their land near the Grasmere border, and they don't have anyone that is a trail building expert. That is sort of what we do. So, we are hoping to go there and work with them and teach them and maybe empower their youth on how to trail build. Maybe it can turn into an opportunity to have them come build trails with us, have summer work and start a relationship."

Melanie Wrigglesworth, Executive Director of Fernie Trails Alliance

There are numerous traditional territories and consultative areas in Revelstoke and Fernie. However, interviewees noted that the Indigenous communities, whose territories include Fernie or Revelstoke, may have a larger presence outside of the town itself. This is a possible explanation for why Indigenous involvement was discussed less frequently in the two communities. This was a unique point present in Fernie and Revelstoke that was not mentioned in the other communities.

Squamish

There were several examples of Indigenous involvement in the outdoor recreation sector in Squamish. A notable example that was repeatedly mentioned is the 10-year relationship between SORCA and the Squamish Nation. Most recently, Squamish Nation and SORCA signed a historic memorandum of understanding which formalizes their relationship. They have worked together on trails that go through the Squamish Nation's territorial and title land, incorporated Squamish language to the trails, founded the Squamish Nation Youth Mountain Bike Program and have plans to continue the relationship.

There were other examples of Indigenous involvement in outdoor recreation in addition to the work of Squamish Nation and SORCA. For instance, interviewees mentioned the Indigenous Women Outdoors group, the Indigenous Life Sports Academy and the Squamish Youth Snowboard and Ski Group. An interview conversation described how outdoor recreation opportunities can help Indigenous youth in reconnecting with their land.

Another conversation that took place was with regards to perceptions about *Land Back*⁴. There are active land transfers taking place in Squamish that could make the Squamish Nation the largest title holder in the area. For many this is an exciting opportunity but for others it can cause some fear around what it means.

"There is also that tension between recreation groups and the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation). It's all based on this fear of what something like Land Back means, a fear born from not taking the time to understand a Skwxwú7mesh perspective."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

The fear of possibly losing access to outdoor spaces can sometimes be associated with the Land Back movement. However, interviews revealed that Land Back does not necessarily mean that access will be lost. Indigenous Peoples may decide to restrict

⁴ Land Back is a movement primarily focused on getting Indigenous lands back to Indigenous Peoples.

access, but they may also decide to keep or change the way in which resources are accessed. Regardless of the decision, it is important for outdoor recreationists to acknowledge that continued access could very well mean the loss of Indigenous cultural values, environmental values, or more. By respecting restricted access, outdoor recreationists may be protecting other values.

Another important conversation to emerge was about the misunderstanding or misuse of Indigenous involvement. People may misrepresent collaborations with Indigenous Peoples. One perception highlighted was that Indigenous involvement was becoming a buzzword instead of a properly processed and meaningful collaboration.

“Several times this summer event organizers said they had Indigenous approval even going so far as putting a Nation as a corporate sponsor, but the Nation didn't give their approval. In other cases, people may say they are working in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples and then their friend happens to be Metis. There are actual referrals and processes. It's not just about people talking to someone that is Indigenous.”

Anonymous

Tofino

In Tofino, Indigenous involvement in outdoor recreation was also extensively discussed. Interviewees mentioned that there are multiple and ongoing initiatives to involve Indigenous youth, several Indigenous economic development opportunities such as trails that connect communities or campgrounds, and Indigenous businesses in the surf, recreation and hospitality scenes. Specifically mentioned were

- The Tla-o-qui-aht's Best Western Tin Wis Resort Lodge
- Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Guardians
- Tribal Park Allies program whereby businesses in the region commit 1% for the First Nation
- Coast Restoration Society, a non-profit that works with Indigenous communities to get rid of derelict vessels
- The 1984 Meares Island court case and the 90s "War in the Woods"⁵

Indigenous involvement in the outdoor recreation sector was especially discussed alongside environmental stewardship efforts. Interviewees spoke about how the Indigenous Peoples in the area have served as stewards for thousands of years and continue to do so.

⁵ The 1984 Meares Island court case and the 90s "War in the Woods" are discussed in detail in section 7.3. *Transitioning Resource Values*.

"We are the tip of a lot of this dialogue so I wanted to make sure that I at least in good faith tried to reach out in case it might help in the report to educate more people about the impacts of tourism and outdoor recreation."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

Indigenous Peoples in Tofino are also at the forefront of initiatives and discussions on sharing the benefits of tourism and outdoor recreation on their territories with their Nations. For instance, territorial agreements and acknowledgements, business stewardship and profit sharing were all mentioned.

"The most common engagement we have in the Tribal Park Allies program is certifying businesses as registered Tribal Parks Allies. They meet conditions on acknowledging our unceded territories, how they share history, that they are good business stewards if they are breaking land and using environmental monitors to mitigate impacts. Or that they report to guardians if there is an environmental concern in their area of operation. Lastly, they agree to target 1% from the clients that would be contributed to the Nation for tribal park regional services and that includes a large scope of things - language programs, culture, education training, stewardship and other community projects."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

"District of Tofino and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation government are meeting with the province to discuss new ways of revenue sharing in regards to tourism, and of course, a lot of our local tourism economy is very connected to outdoor recreation."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

7. Natural Resource Values

The relationship between the resource industry and outdoor recreation emerged during the interviews. Interviewees spoke to the co-existence of resource values, transition of resource values, and the competition for resources.

7.1. Coexisting Resource Values

The co-existence of resource values exists through formal management relationships between outdoor recreationists and industry, through funding, and by creating access.

One of the most evident examples is the Burns Lake Community Forest which is one of the first area-based tenures in B.C. and is one of the largest existing community forests in B.C.. The values of timber harvesting, outdoor recreation, wildlife, and Indigenous cultural values all co-exist in the forest. The community forest is responsible for balancing these values in the long term. When these values come into conflict, there are mandates,

policies, consultations, engagement processes and access management plans that help determine which value will be prioritized.

"Lots of recreation sites and recreation polygons in the community forest. It is a working forest. Everybody recognizes that in a working forest outdoor recreation and harvesting go hand in hand. The community forest creates lots of those access points that recreationists are looking for often through the road networks. It can be a mutually beneficial scenario."

Frank Varga, General Manager of Burns Lake Community Forest

Formal agreements also exist in Fernie. Fernie is surrounded by private land. To build and maintain trails, outdoor recreationists must obtain permission from private landowners including logging companies.

Funding is another way in which values co-exist. The Burns Lake Community Forest helps fund outdoor recreation projects like mountain bike trails and campsites. In Fernie, Teck Resources was also mentioned as a funder of outdoor recreation related projects.

"The community forest helps a lot. Say the bike club needs money to put in a bridge or do work, they would go to the community forest who would then lend them the money. The community forest has done wonderful things all around. It's amazing. They would be the largest supporter of that kind of thing that I know of."

Anonymous

Other examples of how outdoor recreation and industry values co-exist is in how the resource industry enables access to outdoor recreation by creating access points. Old logging roads are for instance used to access outdoor recreation in Squamish, Burns Lake, and Tofino. The resource roads create increased access which can lead to positive outdoor recreation opportunities in the community as was described in Burns Lake.

"A lot of the access to outdoor recreation may not be there if not for the natural resource industry. I think there is a real opportunity to supporting working forests while also supporting outdoor recreation opportunities."

Frank Varga, General Manager of Burns Lake Community Forest

Increased access to outdoor recreation is not always a positive experience. In Tofino, the access points created by old resource roads have led to harmful outdoor recreation practices. It was expressed that outdoor recreation should be redirected to purpose-built campsites and recreation areas.

"In the long run, I would rather have a hundred-unit, family-oriented campsite with sewage or at least an outhouse be built. All of the spur roads in the twenty kilometres to get there should be gated so that they are all required to go to the campsite or go to Tofino to stay on the campground. It is wrong to insinuate that just because the Crown road was built, that it means for the next thousand years we can use this road to go explore sacred areas. We can use this road to go and desecrate and leave behind a big mess. That is not why the road was approved or supported. Develop plans with the First Nation. Decide which roads should be closed."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

7.2. Competition for Resources

Resource values do not always co-exist and can come into competition. First, the resource sector can impact outdoor recreation activities. In Burns Lake, an interviewee described how sometimes trails may be hard to find or not left in the best condition after the resource sector has gone through. In Fernie, changes in land ownership resulted in clear cutting which eliminated trails and cut access to the snowmobile network.

At the same time, the outdoor sector may also impact resource industry activities. Particularly in Squamish, interviewees described how advocacy for outdoor recreation areas can stop industry activities, like logging and mining, from taking place.

"There were very immediate and catastrophic potentialities looming over certain climbing areas. There was going to be a big development on the Smoke Bluffs. There was going to be a gravel quarry at the Chief. There was going to be extensive logging in the Shannon Basin. It was this all or nothing period where you kind of do something or it all disappears."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

7.3. Transitioning Resource Values

Squamish, Revelstoke, Tofino, and Fernie showed evidence of transitioning resource values. The interviewees illustrated how outdoor recreation served as an alternative economic driver which caused a shift in how the natural resources are used and valued.

The transition of resource values was mentioned most frequently and thoroughly in Squamish. Around 25 years ago, Squamish was a very blue-collared town focused on forestry, industrial, and extractive industries. Outdoor recreation was considered a "fringe element" at the time. Then the pulp mill, sawmill, and railyard closures caused a loss of around 600 jobs. At the same time, environmental considerations became more important, and people started to see the potential and value of the outdoors. In the early

2000s the tourism sector started to take off and outdoor recreation has become a bigger focus since then leading Squamish to be known as the “Outdoor Recreation Capital of Canada”.

Transitioning resource values is also apparent in Revelstoke. The community was founded through heavy industry such as rail, mining, and forestry. Surrounded by beautiful landscapes and recreation amenities, the community has been able to leverage these opportunities to increasingly grow the outdoor recreation sector. Notably, the opening of the ski hill in 2007 was mentioned as a significant step in this transition.

“Outdoor recreation is a key, if not THE key primary economic driver in the community. Revelstoke was founded through heavy industry and as we transition from consumptive resource extraction to conservation and resource management, Revelstoke’s economy has transitioned as well.”

Ian Tomm, President of Eagle Pass, Former Executive Director of Avalanche Canada, Former Executive Director of HeliCat Canada, Ski Guide

Tofino also experienced a transition away from fishing and forestry with two notable events marking the transition. Meares Island near Tofino is home to old-growth forests with some trees nearing 1,500 years of age (Mussett, *First logging blockade*). In 1984, the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht Nations declared Meares Island a tribal park in an attempt to stop clear-cutting that was scheduled to take place in the area. Local First Nations and local environmental groups planned a logging blockade which lasted months and led to a court case against the province for the right to issue logging permits. The case was not about how, where or when to log but rather about which government had the right to issue permits. The B.C. Supreme Court sided with the First Nations, supporting their land claims. The ancient forest was successfully protected.

Then in the 90s the “War in the Woods” took place (Mussett, *War in the Woods*). This has been described as one of the biggest environmental movements. The “War in the Woods” attracted thousands of protestors and international attention to protect Clayoquot Sound, which includes Tofino and the surrounding areas, from logging. More than 800 people were arrested. Again, the First Nations won. The B.C. government introduced the Forest Practices Code and logging licenses were transferred to the First Nation.

While the two events were not motivated by outdoor recreation, they set the stage for future outdoor recreation and tourism pursuits. In the absence of logging, the First Nation and residents of the Tofino area have been able to pursue outdoor opportunities. Additionally, the international attention received by these environmental movements created new interest in visiting the area which increased the area’s opportunity to pursue new economic activities.

“Ever since 1984 and the 90s the “War in the Woods”, it attracted people to see the beauty in the region. It really set us off on a pace to be able to gear businesses towards tourism.”

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

Transitioning resource values was not a strong theme in Fernie. However, it was mentioned that younger people tend to have less resistance to tourism as they seem to understand that the mine will not be there forever. This may point to shifting values.

8. Destination Marketing and Management

Interviewees in Fernie, Revelstoke and Squamish spoke about the transition from destination marketing to destination management as a response to the impacts of recreationists. The local destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are recognizing that by promoting outdoor recreation experiences, they are increasing the load on the land base and its impacts.

“Nobody else seems to be able to do it and it's important to our community. We are taking a level of responsibility in this as well because we are a tourism organization, and we market these types of experiences. We promote hiking, mountain biking, fly fishing and all of these experiences. Obviously, this translates to an increase in demand on the land base for these experiences. This is our way of saying we are responsible for this too.”

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

Tourism Fernie is carrying out a *Tourism Master Plan* and a sustainable tourism project called the *Regional District of East Kootenay Sustainable Tourism Project* to address the outdoor recreation challenges in the area. As a result, a new 3-year pilot project called *AmbassadorWILD* was launched in summer 2022. The program focuses on taking care of outdoor spaces, research to better understand the impacts of outdoor recreation, and user education. The project is taking place in four popular outdoor spaces that have been experiencing high use and negative impacts.

Specifically mentioned for Revelstoke was destination management planning, marketing campaigns, limiting promotion, and tourism funding going towards trails. For instance, there was a social media campaign that encouraged people to donate to outdoor organizations like Avalanche Canada, the Snowmobile Club and Search and Rescue.

"From a tourism perspective, we work with recreation groups on funding initiatives. Our funding is derived from tourists. Tourists use recreation areas. We are working on creative ways to funnel our funding which is normally for marketing towards those organizations."

Robyn Goldsmith, Destination and Sustainability Manager of Tourism Revelstoke, Volunteer Board Member of Revelstoke Cycling Association, Volunteer Race Organizer of Revelstoke Women's Enduro, Mountain Bike Coach

Interviewees in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino discussed the implications of promoting outdoor recreation spaces especially as it relates to being able to manage users and impacts. Destinations marketing organizations (DMOs) and Destination BC do not hold the same level of responsibility in managing outdoor spaces as do land managers like Recreation Sites and Trails BC or BC Parks. Some DMOs are beginning to support the management of destinations through partnerships, resources, and funding but that was not their initial purpose. Destination management may be described as a reactionary response to the impacts from increased users due to promotional efforts and the limited capacity from land managers to address arising issues.

"Tourism organizations promote visitor experiences which can include recreation sites and trails. They don't necessarily have to manage these areas, but we do. It can become challenging for us if the sites or trails are promoted without consultation, and we are not prepared to manage the increased capacity."

Lisa Cox, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Rocky Mountain South District

"Common in Revelstoke and in other places in B.C. is that local government gets excited and sees that it is a real gem in terms of promoting their town which is a big driver for promoting economic diversification, shifting economies, heads in beds, and revenues to local businesses. It's a delicate balance. I think that this is a growing challenge, and that the local government does not have the same responsibility as Recreation Sites and Trails or the Ministry of Environment to take care of the resources, but they want to advertise it to bring more people in. The whole question makes me think of sustainability."

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

Interviewees questioned when outdoor spaces should be promoted. Some interviewees suggested that certain outdoor recreation spaces do not need to be advertised as they are already seeing more people than can be managed. Others suggested that promotion needs to take place after ensuring that an outdoor recreation

area and the community has the necessary development, management, and community infrastructure to handle expected user loads.

"We are heavily reliant on the volunteer base. To be sustainable, it needs to be fully for the community and community oriented. Tourism is heavily promoting resources that we are struggling with the community to maintain."

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

Community Impacts

Community impacts refers to effects that take place in the community or for residents.

1. Community Culture and Identity

In all the communities, interviewees expressed how outdoor recreation play an important role in the community. Interviewees described the significance of the outdoor recreation sector economically, socially, and culturally. Interviewees also described how residents value the outdoors and the outdoor recreation opportunities that are available. There was often a sense of community identity tied to outdoor recreation.

"Culturally it is a significant part of Tofino. People who move to Tofino or live in Tofino generally consider their time outside very important and central to their lives."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

"The thing we really have going for us is backdoor access to outdoor recreation. The Lake District has endless lakes and trails. Those who are attracted to live here enjoy spending a lot of time outdoors. Outdoor recreation is in essence what living in the North is all about."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

"Outdoor recreation is our bread and butter, more and more so. We also have forestry and hydro and those are all parts of our community but more and more we see the fact that we are isolated and surrounded by this beautiful landscape and these amazing recreational amenities that is broadening our growth as a destination and culture. Not just as a destination but also as a resident. So outdoor recreation is culturally important. And it forms part of our economic foundation and growth."

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development of City of Revelstoke

"Outdoor recreation is ingrained in everyone that lives here."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

"In Toronto you walk around with a Leafs hat. In Squamish it's SORCA. Someone said to me one day, "I see you have the unofficial uniform of Squamish," when they saw me wearing my SORCA hat in the grocery store. It feels that way because we are a bigger organization in town and it's something that you have in common with a lot of other people."

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

In addition, interviewees also highlighted that outdoor recreation forms a part of the communities' reputation that non-residents recognize the community by.

"There is worldwide visibility and recognition for our bike park."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

"Domestically and internationally, Tofino is known as a global destination."

Anonymous

The interview revealed that outdoor recreation is especially significant in places like Tofino or Burns Lake as these rural communities have limited infrastructure to support other activities. Residents of Burns Lake and Tofino both expressed that living in these communities can be very challenging. The importance of outdoor recreation to maintaining mental health in the cold dark winters was specifically mentioned in Burns Lake. In Tofino, the weather was also mentioned as a factor that makes the community a typically less desirable place to live but because of outdoor recreation many people want to live there.

"Because Tofino is remote, has few amenities, and the weather is often extremely wet and stormy, it can be a challenging place to live. People value their time outside. Surfing, being on the beach, in the forest, on the water, is extremely important to why people are here. It takes a lot of sacrifice to pursue this life. It takes a different type of mindset. So, people who come here and live here and dedicate themselves to living here for long periods of time already sacrifice amenities and urban comforts. Instead, they choose to value those things that you would call outdoor recreation."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

"If you don't like the outdoors then you shouldn't live in Burns Lake. Other than the outdoors, the town doesn't offer a lot of things, but it does offer a lot of outdoor activities that are completely endless."

Anonymous

2. Lifestyle and Wellbeing

Interviewees in all five communities described how easy access to outdoor spaces and how seeing others participate in outdoor recreation activities can motivate their own participation. The interview data suggests that this leads to a physically active lifestyle that many residents follow.

"When you have that ethos that is getting outside to recreate, I think it creates a positive momentum and a lot of people participate in that. I think we are a very fit community and I think that equates with a healthy community."

Robyn Goldsmith, Destination and Sustainability Manager of Tourism Revelstoke, Volunteer Board Member of Revelstoke Cycling Association, Volunteer Race Organizer of Revelstoke Women's Enduro, Mountain Bike Coach

"Where we live you have to embrace being in the outdoors. Fishing, hunting, canoeing, boating, fat biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, mountain biking, we kind of have it all. But our winter can be long, so you need to embrace the outdoors or you're going to go crazy."

Patti Dube, President of Ride Burns, PE Teacher of Lakes District Secondary, Coach and Instructor of various outdoor recreation activities

In some interviews, interviewees observed personal mental or physical health benefits. Sometimes, interviewees would also mention that there is "research out there," that shows the link between being outside and wellness⁶.

"I think the recreation opportunities provide a good physical, mental and social health outlet for our community."

Matt Parker, President of Squamish Trails Society

Interviewees in Burns Lake, Fernie, Revelstoke, and Squamish point out that their communities have high-performing athletes.

⁶ Other research on the links between outdoor recreation and mental or physical health were not explored in depth in this study.

"We call it the Fernie bubble. So many people are elite outdoor athletes here that there is kind of a distorted view of what the general population's fitness level is if many of your peers are top athletes."

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

At the same time, some interviewees in Squamish cautioned that the culture around outdoor recreation may create pressure to participate. This can be especially intimidating for people who are not avid athletes. It can make people not ingrained in the culture feel left out.

"It can also have negative impacts. People can feel social pressure. Everyone is always doing something. Whether that is the best thing is up for debate. We have lots of mountain sports. There is lots of ambition. Over the years people talk about the toxicity of that. Everybody is always doing something rad every weekend. It's that social media FOMO⁷. People don't come here to live their lives, they come here to live their best lives. Whether that is a good pursuit all the time is something I have questioned. Everyone always has pretty photos."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

3. Social Connection and Community Engagement

The interview data also revealed that outdoor spaces can be the grounds for social connections. Social connections happen naturally whereby people participate in an outdoor recreation activity with family or friends. In a more official capacity, outdoor recreation clubs and groups promote social connections by hosting events, races, and community activities that connect people with similar interests.

"There is an impact on social connection. The best example is Ride Burns that develops and manages the bike park. There is a fairly significant membership that is out on a weekly basis as a crew doing trail building and maintenance. There is strong comradery and commitment. The same is seen for cross-country skiing. Same for Lakes Outdoor Rec Society - an organization that is responsible for much of the maintenance on free camping in the region."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

⁷ FOMO stands for fear of missing out.

"We have 3,400 members. Although not everyone is local, that is essentially about 15% of the community. I think that speaks to the community coming together."

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

Outdoor recreation also influences citizen engagement. You can see this in the communities by way of volunteering and by way of advocating for outdoor spaces that residents come to love.

"There are organized groups that make sure they are involved in discussions. It is the values that are near and dear to their hearts, so they are more involved in those discussions on the ground level rather than later on."

Lisa Cox, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Rocky Mountain South District

While outdoor recreation can bring people together, it can also pull them apart. Interviewees described that different interests from different user groups can cause friction. Some examples that were brought up included

- Friction between different user groups such as trails being used by groups who the trail was not intended for
- Friction between locals and visitors
- Friction between long-time residents and the changing culture

"The way in which some groups use the wilderness can be viewed in a negative manner by other groups that use it."

Matt Parker, President of Squamish Trails Society

"Disconnect between different outdoor recreation groups. Not all outdoor recreation enthusiasts are passionate about the same things."

Robyn Goldsmith, Destination and Sustainability Manager of Tourism Revelstoke, Volunteer Board Member of Revelstoke Cycling Association, Volunteer Race Organizer of Revelstoke Women's Enduro, Mountain Bike Coach

4. Economic

Interviewees were asked to speak about economic activities that they observed taking place in the communities. This was asked to get a narrative understanding of how economic activities that stem from outdoor recreation are developed locally. This is not an economic impact assessment. Most interviewees only provided a narrative summary of their observations.

A limited number of interviewees provided supporting numerical data. Remarkable comments include interviewees mentioning that B.C. has the highest market share in Heliskiing internationally. Possibly holding around 85% of the international market share. The heliskiing industry alone provides \$326 million in total economic output to B.C.'s economy (Helicat Canada, 2019). Interviewees also mentioned that Tofino's tourism sector is motivated by outdoor recreation. It generates \$240 million in direct economic output (InterVISTAS Consulting Inc., 2019).

There were three themes that emerged when speaking about economic impacts. The first was the identification of economic activities that interviewees linked to outdoor recreation. The second was how outdoor recreation is used as a selling point. Finally, the third is how outdoor recreation can help diversify local economies.

4.1. Observed Economic Activities

In the five communities the interviewees spoke how outdoor recreation in their community led to economic activity. The most identified direct impacts were guiding and other tourism operators. Interviewees referenced guided fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, dog sledding, skiing, heliskiing, white-water rafting, mountain biking, rock climbing, and whale watching among other activities.

The other most identified direct impacts were outdoor recreation equipment retail or manufacturing. It was easy for interviewees to identify outdoor retailers or manufacturers in their communities. A few stand out comments from the interviews include:

- From 2017 to 2022, Burns Lake's local outdoor recreation store, Woods N' Water, went from, "one person working at the store and in the summertime to now having nine" (*anonymous interview*)
- In Revelstoke, ""The resort has only recently opened mountain biking and already there is a measurable impact on bike shops in town. A small town of 7,000 people to have 3 full-service bike shops plus tuning shops is a strong indicator" (*Ian Tomm, President of Eagle Pass⁸*).
- In Squamish, "around 2004 to 2011 there were three bike shops and a handful of operators. Those were the direct mountain bike industry and companies involved. In 2022, the last number I heard from the District of Squamish economic department is that there are 94 companies directly involved in mountain biking in this town" (*Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of SORCA*).

⁸ Also, Former Executive Director of Avalanche Canada, Former Executive Director of HeliCat Canada, and Ski Guide.

- More generally, in Squamish there are currently, “188 local businesses that employ 364 local workers in the outdoor recreation sector” (*Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish*).

It was also commonly discussed that outdoor recreation was a driver of tourism, and as such, it can benefit accommodation providers or the development of the food and beverage industry.

“We are a destination of choice. Our hospitality industry, spas, tourism operators, Heli and Cat skiing, ski shops downtown, a huge and high-quality food and beverage sector, that is all based on outdoor recreation.”

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development of City of Revelstoke

“Ancillary businesses that are created from the outdoor rec sector are significant, like breweries and distilleries, to service providers, to the hospitality sector. I think they are all impacted by the outdoor recreation sector and our supply chain for outdoor recreation is large.”

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

“I would suggest that every restaurant, every hotel, every outdoor apparel, every quick service restaurant are hugely reliant on mountain biking. I came from hospitality, and I ask my friends still working there to give me an arbitrary number as far as what percentage of summer traffic are mountain bikers. And they told me that upwards of 70% of Squamish hotel clientele are mountain bikers.”

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

Outdoor recreation events, such as races were also mentioned. There is a certain economic aspect to events because they can bring people into town, and the events may generate revenues.

“We see a lot of events and races in Revelstoke and in the region. Companies from Alberta come. There is that economic spinoff where more people come for organized events.”

Kevin Eskelin, Regional Manager of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Southern Interior East Region

The marketing and film industry were also linked to outdoor recreation in Squamish and Tofino. They were both mentioned as locations for filming outside and in Squamish specifically there is a sector dedicated to marketing and film technology.

An interesting comment that emerged in a handful of interviews was how the presence of the outdoor recreation sector helps attract a certain type of people to the community and a certain type of business. In other words, interviewees described a value alignment between the residents and the businesses. Similarly, interviewees described how residents in the community may be inclined to entrepreneurial pursuits.

“The outdoor recreation industry is highly place-based, as evidenced by the presence of climbing companies, performance athlete apparel, and trail mapping software (GIS) businesses in Squamish. The town's natural environment provides an ideal testing ground for these innovative companies, allowing them to create high-quality products that meet the needs and desires of outdoor enthusiasts. This cachet adds to the appeal of Squamish as a hub for outdoor recreation businesses, they are testing their products in the same environment that their consumers want to be in.”

Wendy Koh, Regional Manager of Regional Economic Operations (Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation) in the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley Region

“There are lots of examples of companies that start here because of the outdoor recreation sector and the entrepreneurial nature of who lives here.”

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

4.2. Outdoor Recreation as a Selling Point

A theme that emerged throughout the interviews is how outdoor recreation is used as a selling point. Outdoor recreation in all communities is a focal point of destination marketing. It is also used to attract new residents and recruit workers. In Squamish, interviewees suggested that the number of remote workers located in Squamish is significant and that they should be considered in future outdoor recreation economic impact assessments⁹. In Squamish, an interviewee observed how developers use outdoor recreation imagery to market new developments.

“One of our biggest selling features for attracting new residents is outdoor recreation.”

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

⁹ Interviewees described how people live in and move to Squamish to participate in outdoor recreation. Of the remote workers located there, it would be interesting to investigate how many of these workers live in Squamish to access outdoor recreation opportunities.

“One of the main focuses of tourism in the area is outdoor recreation.”

Robyn Peel, Community Economic Development Coordinator of Community Futures East Kootenay

“Look at any marketing brochure from any developer in this area and guess what? There is a beautiful picture of one of our single tracks with a mountain bike going through it. They know that’s the draw to get people out of the city.”

Ian Lowe, Executive Director and Former Board Member of Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association (SORCA)

In spring of 2021 the Elk Valley Economic Initiative reported on *Elk Valley Business Retention and Expansion* (Elk Valley Economic Initiative, 2022). A key finding was that “outdoor activities and recreational opportunities” was the top strength for a community as a place to do business.

4.3. Outdoor Recreation as an Economic Diversification Strategy

Throughout the interviews it was also noted that outdoor recreation helps diversify local economies. In Revelstoke, Squamish and Tofino interviewees believed that outdoor recreation is a key economic driver in their community. In Fernie and Burns Lake interviewees highlighted the value in having the outdoor recreation sector alongside other sectors.

“The outdoor gear and recreation industry, which encompasses tourism, plays an important contributing role to the economy of Squamish. It lends to economic diversification efforts by having a multitude of smaller, craft-based businesses that foster rural economic resiliency and community sustainability.”

Wendy Koh, Regional Manager of Regional Economic Operations (Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation) in the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley Region

“Outdoor recreation gives our community another sector of the economy besides resource extraction. It is more diverse and there is strength in diversity.”

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

The intentional development of the outdoor recreation economy is a similarity in the communities. All the communities are looking at developing economic activities linked to outdoor recreation.

"Outdoor recreation has put us on the map. My job now as economic development officer is to find a better way to monetize it."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

"For the District of Squamish economic development, one of our focus areas is on outdoor recreation, in terms of cluster development. We are working with the outdoor sector and our outdoor sector is defined very specifically with three sub-sectors. One is gear manufacturing, so outdoor rec tech design firms. Two are performance apparel design firms. And three, is adventure-based media marketing and film."

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

"For some of our recreation side on the tech sector, we have an idea factory looking for ideas of recreation products. We help with funding streams and development. It's a fairly new program for us that started within the past couple of years."

Cat Moffat, Economic Development Coordinator of City of Revelstoke

KORE, SORE and More Outdoor Recreation Economy: The Kootenay Outdoor Recreation Enterprise (KORE) is an initiative in the Kootenays (which includes Revelstoke and Fernie), that is dedicated to the local outdoor gear manufacturing sector that was mentioned several times in the interviews. It was also mentioned that the Sea-to-Sky region is in the process of building a similar local organization inspired by KORE. Furthermore, it was also mentioned that the Island region is considering developing a similarly inspired initiative. The emergence of these organizations highlights the intentional development of economic opportunities related to outdoor recreation.

5. Housing & Migration

The interviews showed that outdoor recreation is a reason that people stay in the community and a reason for people to move into the community. The interviewees commonly described it as lifestyle choices, access to outdoor recreation opportunities and access to nature.

"Our research has pointed to the lifestyle one can have here in Squamish as the primary reason why people locate here. It's the access to nature and the recreational opportunities one can have."

Kate Mulligan, Economic Development Officer of District of Squamish

"I think outdoor recreation also has a large impact on resident attraction. So why do people come to Fernie? Well, the Elk Valley Economic Initiative did a study on business retention and expansion and one of the main reasons that people are here is for the outdoors. That is one of the top reasons for being here, so it has massive implications for why people come and why people stay in our region."

Robyn Peel, Community Economic Development Coordinator of Community Futures East Kootenay

COVID-19 and remote working options made moving into these communities more attractive. Interviewees described how during the pandemic, people began to move away from urban centres and towards smaller and more rural communities. Remote working further facilitated these migrations as people were not bound to a specific working area. The interview data suggests that remote workers choose their community of residence based on lifestyle factors and in these communities, outdoor recreation is a big part of the lifestyle.

"Recently with the pandemic we are seeing an exodus of people from cities to outdoor recreation communities with outdoor amenities. That is a trend with more opportunities to work remotely."

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

Tofino attracts young people. It was uniquely discussed in Tofino interviews that the town's demographics are younger than other communities with there being many residents in their 20s and 30s.

"The surfing and the values of enjoying all of that is one of the reasons Tofino has one of the youngest demographics on the island in terms of workforce which is a strategic advantage for that area."

Anonymous

Fernie is a three-and-a-half-hour drive from Calgary which uniquely attracts second homeowners from Alberta. An estimated 30% of homeowners in Fernie are Albertan second homeowners. Interviewees described that second homeowners are motivated by outdoor recreation opportunities.

The conversations on housing and migration in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish and Tofino were almost always accompanied by concerns over rising housing prices and affordability. A lack of housing supply was also mentioned. Rising housing prices and affordability issues are not unique to these communities and their causes are out of the scope of this project. That being said, housing prices and affordability have impacts on the outdoor recreation sector.

"I know a lot of people who are leaving who are finding it hard in Squamish these days. It's hard because of the branding of the place. It has created a lot of demand on it. This recreation industry where you make this place look amazing and suddenly everyone wants to come here and that changes the place a lot."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

The shifting demographics were also described as a concern when and if the newcomers are not as involved in the community. Lower levels of citizen involvement are a concern when considering the level of citizen involvement that goes into the development and maintenance of outdoor recreation infrastructure. In Squamish, this concern extended to commuters. Some Squamish residents commute to work as they are in the sea-to-sky corridor and in proximity to Metro Vancouver and Whistler. As many as about 5,000 of Squamish's active workforce are commuters or remote workers.

Another effect of unaffordable housing prices and low housing supply in Squamish and Tofino's outdoor recreation sectors are the increasing numbers of people living in vans and dispersed or illegal camping, as was described in the section *Human-Caused Damages to the Land and Its Values*.

Unaffordability also relates to lost economic opportunities. Interviewees described how staff shortages prevent businesses from reaching their full capacity even if the demand is there. This relates to housing because as the communities become less affordable, there are less people that are willing to or able to fill service positions. This is a general effect on the community's economy that also affects the outdoor recreation sector as it relates to fulfilling supply for the demand in outdoor recreation related goods and services.

Concerns about housing prices and affordability were not present in Burns Lake. In fact, one interviewee described how Burns Lake can be attractive for newcomers because housing prices are lower than in neighbouring communities.

6. Strain on Community Infrastructure

The community's infrastructure not being able to keep up is a topic that emerged in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino. Interviewees spoke about this because outdoor recreation often attracts people to the community and small, rural communities may have a harder time managing the associated impacts.

"There is all of this development and pull to come to this adventure community, but we don't quite have the infrastructure and resources set up, and we have been like that for quite a long time. Recreation wise, it does have a lot of strain on small communities and on resources."

Anonymous

"In a rural destination like we are versus a more urban destination, we have limited capacities and a lot of land that people are recreating on."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

Specifically mentioned were concerns about Tofino's sewage and waste disposal, Revelstoke's water quality as some residents have water intake from streams, and Squamish's traffic.

"Tofino has over 750,000 visitors annually - for years all resident and visitor sewage has gone directly into the ocean; it's impacted the waters and the seabed. We are putting in a \$78 million wastewater treatment plant to amend that. It is taking a significant investment to offset some of the environmental impacts of tourism specifically."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

6.1. Safety and Emergency Services

Also specifically mentioned in Revelstoke, Squamish and Tofino were the weight on safety and emergency services. Busier outdoor recreation areas may push more people into the backcountry and increase the number of underprepared backcountry users. This can cause strains on search and rescue services which are all volunteer led across the province. It can also cause a strain to local hospitals and emergency medical services.

"In addition to the positives there are negatives. We need to face it all. We need to keep our eyes wide open to figure out how we are going to do this together. Sometimes it's questioned whether we should be trying to go after more visitors."

Anonymous

"As Revelstoke or any small community succeeds in the outdoor recreation market, it brings more and more people. Search and rescue and EMS capacity becomes strained."

Ian Tomm, President of Eagle Pass, Former Executive Director of Avalanche Canada, Former Executive Director of HeliCat Canada, Ski Guide

These concerns were investigated more thoroughly in the report *Tourism in the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Region, A Vital Snapshot* where they found statistical increases in emergency room arrivals, paramedic call volumes, documented public safety incidents and crime (Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, 2021).

Barriers, Challenges and Other Discussions

In all the communities, there was extensive discussion about the barriers and challenges to the outdoor recreation sector. Often, they emerged within the first ten minutes of an interview as interviewees spoke about their work.

The interview data illustrates that land or resource managers, organized outdoor groups, Indigenous Peoples and destination management play an essential role in minimizing or eliminating the negative impacts of outdoor recreation such as human-caused damages. The interview data also demonstrates that the benefits of outdoor recreation such as environmental stewardship, Indigenous involvement, inclusivity, and education are largely enhanced by the work of these groups. As such, the role of land or resource managers, organized outdoor groups, Indigenous Peoples and destination management are essential to maintaining a healthy outdoor recreation sector. Challenges to these groups are a direct challenge to the continued existence of the sector.

1. Limited Capacity for Land Managers

Interviews in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish, and Tofino highlighted how outdoor recreation spaces, especially high-use areas, require active monitoring and management. It can help limit or eliminate human-caused damages¹⁰ and can lead to positive outcomes¹¹. In high-use areas, like Silver Spring Lake in Fernie, human-caused damages and the need for more active management and monitoring is evident.

"The trail leading to a very popular cliff jumping site, Silver Springs Lake, is governed by Recreation Sites and Trails BC but they have no capacity to really manage or monitor it or clean it. There's no toilet. It's getting so much use now during peak summer season. People park along the forestry road creating a safety hazard and there's garbage left behind. People leave human waste in the bushes and there's no signage. There are a variety of areas like this. I know you are probably hearing this story everywhere. We talk to Recreation Sites and Trails BC because they are one of our partners and they support the needs, but they do not have the resources to manage or maintain so many places. We were thankful in their support to find solutions and they did donate an existing toilet that we paid to fly in and install, but we have to maintain it since they don't have the resources to do so."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

¹⁰ Section 1. *Human-Caused Damages to the Land and Its Values* describes damages in detail.

¹¹ Section 3. *Environmental Stewardship* further describes the positive outcome of monitoring and management.

The limited capacity from Recreation Sites and Trails BC and BC Parks was frequently described. Interviews often referenced a lack of resources and staffing. They also described the large areas that the limited staff from these organizations are managing. BC Parks manages 14.4% of the land in B.C. which includes 1000 protected areas and totals 14 million hectares of land (Province of British Columbia, *Types of parks and protected areas*). Recreation Sites and Trails BC manages recreation on Crown land outside of parks which could include as much as 79.6% of B.C. land¹².

"BC Parks is so strapped for field resources. It operates with a skeleton crew at best and that often has vacancies."

Anonymous

"It all comes back to work with Recreation Sites and Trails BC as far as having trails on Crown land. Their staff is amazing. The person that manages our area manages basically from the Alberta border to Nelson. That is a huge swath of area. We have 400 kilometres of trails and Kimberly has 150 kilometres of trail and Cranbrook has more. They are managing all of this and there is just not enough staff."

Melanie Wrigglesworth, Executive Director of Fernie Trails Alliance

The interviewees described how Recreation Sites and Trails BC officers should be managing all recreation on Crown land outside of parks, but the limited capacity leads to prioritizing certain areas over others. For instance, established recreation sites and trails are often prioritized over other areas. Areas that cannot be actively managed may be closed to preserve user safety, environmental values, or other values like cultural ones.

"Recreation Sites and Trails BC first and foremost manage established recreation sites and trails on Crown land. When they have capacity, it's also recreation on any Crown land, but generally there isn't capacity to manage recreation outside of established areas."

Anonymous

The limited management capacity topic did not emerge in Burns Lake. However, in comparison to the other communities, the land-management conversations were centered around the community forest which did not seem to have any capacity issues and in fact was often a distributor of funds for recreation projects. It would be interesting to note if capacity issues in land management would have emerged had we spoken to other land managers in the area.

¹² BC is 94% Crown land (Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, 2010). 79.6% was calculated by subtracting the 14.4% of the Crown land that is parks from the total Crown land.

2. Limited Funding

Access to limited funding was described as a challenge in all five communities. It was described how land managers, outdoor recreation groups, Indigenous Peoples and destination management often require more access to consistent funding for outdoor recreation spaces and programs.

The challenge of limited funding is closely related to the limited capacity of Recreation Sites and Trails BC and BC Parks. Both topics were often mentioned together. Interviewees made clear links with how limited funding also limited the capacity to have more staff and resources resulting in less management.

"At the current rate we are just destroying these places. That's what I see in parks. In the past 5 years, there have been huge changes in these areas. Especially the areas that have less funding or aren't able to be managed. Both in BC Parks and Recreation Sites and Trails BC Crown land."

Anonymous

"Everybody is pretty much saying the same story. Yes, we understand. Yes, it's important. We have no money to do more. We have no more staff, and this is the challenge."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

For outdoor recreation groups funding can also be a barrier. This is significant to the outdoor recreation sector because much of the on-the-ground work is conducted by community outdoor recreation groups that rely on volunteers. Many of the groups described how significant it was to have a paid position within the volunteer organizations. They described how they could not be where they are without access to funding. At the same time, interviewees highlighted the need for more dedicated funding to support the continued work of volunteers.

"The biggest improvement to our trails the past few years has been from the Columbia Basin Trust wage subsidy which allowed us to have five paid crew through summer. Volunteers can only work for so much, but a paid trail crew can get so much done like signage and infrastructure. That is a huge asset to our community. If I didn't have that, I would need to look for funding."

Melanie Wrigglesworth, Executive Director of Fernie Trails Alliance

"Lots of grants support building trails but don't support maintenance of trails. There are not as many grants, so the trails befall to overuse."

Anonymous

"During my time as Mayor, I worked to find ways to better support and fund the non-profit organizations in our area that worked incredibly hard to provide different outdoor rec opportunities."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

More experienced outdoor recreation groups can more easily access funding. This is an important observation when considering the interview data in this study because the outdoor groups interviewed were well-established had succeeded in accessing funds. The challenge of accessing funds may be more pronounced for less experienced groups.

"The more sophisticated organizations and boards get, the more access to grants they get and the more successful they get in accessing grants. I've seen that over my time in the cycling association."

Robyn Goldsmith, Destination and Sustainability Manager of Tourism Revelstoke, Volunteer Board Member of Revelstoke Cycling Association, Volunteer Race Organizer of Revelstoke Women's Enduro, Mountain Bike Coach

Most conversations about funding were centered around outdoor recreation projects, specifically the maintenance and development of trails and outdoor recreation sites. However, the need for funding to protect sacred Indigenous sites was also mentioned.

"There should be a place to get funding to deal with sacred sites and mitigate impacts if a Nation has an issue like the removal of artifacts from sacred areas. They are kind of case by case. Not many Nations come forward and say, "these are all our sacred areas," but if there is one being impacted it would be nice if there is a place to go to and help design a plan and reduce impact. At the moment, we have to conduct our own fundraising to do any work in that area."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

Funding dedicated to stewardship and research can also be challenging to access. In Fernie, new funding streams were created for the *AmbassadorWILD* pilot project that is focused on education and research. Interviewees described how funding is not guaranteed after the initial pilot phase.

"We needed to find money to do a three-year pilot project where we created an AmbassadorWILD program because the government is extremely limited to do this stuff. After three years the funding is going to run out. We built it as a three-year program to ideally give us enough time to show the virtues of why this is important and why it's needed so that we can try to find a way to continue to get more funding from the current and new partners, including Tourism Fernie."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

3. Complex Issues and Complex Processes

Land managers, organized outdoor groups, and tourism management described the complex issues and complex processes that are faced for outdoor recreation projects.

"The South Island-Sunshine Coast District encompasses the entire South Island District which runs just north of Qualicum and out to Tofino as well as the entire Sunshine Coast. Our district is administered by two staff based in Nanaimo including one recreation officer and one technician. We have many sites and trails spread over a large and complex geographical area including many different communities and Indigenous Nations with unique land interests. Our sites and trails include many large fee-for-service campsites, rustic non-fee campsites, multi day backcountry trails and paddling routes, front country trails, and dozens of backcountry shelters. We are reliant on a model of partnership agreements with volunteer groups, societies, local governments and business proponents to help us manage our diverse inventory of sites and trails."

Luke Clarke, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Sunshine Coast - South Island District

In general, there seems to be frustration with the lengthy process requirements for project approvals.

"I understand the frustration with the permit process because a lot of it is engagement and that can take a while. People get frustrated and want to cut corners."

Anonymous

Interviewees described how processes can be further complicated when there are many stakeholders to engage with.

For instance, numerous landowners can be an added complexity. The importance of building relationships with landowners was discussed. A relationship with clear and ongoing communication facilitates the process requirements for outdoor recreation projects. Absent communication makes the processes more complicated. It was also described how unclear landownership can result in lengthier processes.

"One interesting scenario we had is with the Morrissey boat launch and parking area on the Elk River. It is one of the most important river access sites for locals, visitors and river operators. It's just an old dirt access into the river and there is a little bit of gravel parking there. It's right adjacent to a BC Park. As part of our process, we hired an engineering firm and surveying company because if you want to try to make improvements on the land you have to know the land and who owns it and make sure everybody knows what's going on. It's part of the process, it costs

money and time. When the survey for Morrissey was completed, the land that the boat launch was on was not Ministry of Transportation at all, which everybody assumed including BC Parks. It was actually within the BC Park boundary. A more streamlined process automatically became a much more complex and lengthy process to try to deal with this tiny boat launch that needs help right away. A project supported by all partners including local government and our environmental partners such as Wildsight and Elk River Alliance.”

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

Engaging with Indigenous Peoples is an important part of outdoor recreation projects. Additional complex aspects of this engagement can be varying levels of knowledge and understanding, ongoing treaty negotiations, reconciliation agreements, and the capacity of the Indigenous Peoples to engage.

“There are a lot of different stakeholders with different relationships. Numerous First Nations are interested in Revelstoke, this results in complex relationships among stakeholders. Then you introduce a bunch of public recreation stakeholders with different levels of understanding and sophistication on what they should be doing with First Nations consultation.”

Ian Tomm, President of Eagle Pass, Former Executive Director of Avalanche Canada, Former Executive Director of HeliCat Canada, Ski Guide

“There are other complexities at play in our relationship with Nations surrounding recreation management which include treaty negotiations, reconciliation agreements, and government to government agreements. Our relationships with individual Nations in my district are becoming more unique as Nations continue to refine their standards and protocols in how they want land managed in their traditional territories and how they would like to be engaged on recreation management issues and decision making.”

Luke Clarke, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Sunshine Coast - South Island District

Finally, the complex issues can generally become more challenging as projects are further complicated by limited capacity and funding.

“A lot of thinking outside the box needs to be done to manage complex issues. BC Parks doesn’t have the in-house resources to manage all of it.”

Anonymous

"We are trying to minimize those impacts and those challenges and want to spend what has been given by grants before that money is lost because it's taking so long to do the process."

Jikke Gyorki, Executive Officer of Tourism Fernie

4. Over-Reliance on Volunteers

Interviews, especially in Burns Lake, Fernie, Revelstoke, and Squamish, stressed the vital role that volunteers play in maintaining and building outdoor recreation infrastructure and providing opportunities. However, concerns emerged around the reliance on volunteers. The interview data highlights that volunteers are being asked to navigate complex issues and pushed to take on big projects. If the community wants new or improved outdoor recreation infrastructure, volunteers often need to step up because there are no other resources available.

"When you think about a mountain bike network or Nordic ski network, for volunteers to do that, I think it is a big job. It's obviously asking a lot and recognizing that it's the only way. If government says, "Well, we don't actually have any more resources to allocate towards this. So, if you want it, the volunteer base has to step up so you can have that for the community." That's where it is tricky because they are big jobs and sometimes it comes down to a small number of people."

Anonymous

"We have a significant number of trails in the area, and we have an incredible number of volunteers who honestly are tired because of the sheer amount of effort they give."

Dolores Funk, Economic Development Officer and Former Mayor of Village of Burns Lake

Interviews highlighted that volunteers do not always return. Burnout, aging demographics, and other factors were suggested to play a role. This is a challenge to outdoor recreation groups and to land management but also to the outdoor recreation sector as a whole, considering the important role that volunteers play.

"We have heard from some communities that coming out of the pandemic, they don't have the return of their volunteer base. I think part of it is aging demographics and the volunteers may be getting older and not having as many folks stepping in. So, there is a bit of an erosion of that volunteer base and perhaps there needs to be a call to action and if your volunteers were older and more vulnerable to COVID-19, they may still be hesitant to be around other people."

Anonymous

"All trails are built by volunteers. All trail builders and crag developers are huge for outdoor recreation. They facilitate everyone's rec time and that's not necessarily supported by the province or supported by the district. Lots of them are the older generation from the 80s. We have this huge generational gap between all the people that did the work and all of the people that are reaping the benefits and there is not really a great connection."

Kieran Brownie, Board Member of Squamish Access Society

"With recreation growing so quickly, or at least from my perspective it is, that problem is growing alongside it as well. I think relying on volunteers is starting to be too much. Of the recreation groups in my area, only about 10% of the leaders are the same from seven or eight years ago. That's not really a long time. People burn out and move on and somebody else comes in and gets up to speed and then they burn out too, so it's definitely something that I think is becoming more and more difficult."

Anonymous

5. No Plan or Vision

The need for more planning emerged in Fernie, Revelstoke, Squamish and Tofino. Interviewees spoke to this need as it relates to

- Capturing revenues from users to support maintenance, monitoring and management
- Strategic planning for trail use
- Proactive user management to improve guest experience
- Planning for specific users such as dispersed/illegal camping or ATV use in areas that do not currently have a plan in place
- Plans that are co-developed or consulted with Indigenous Peoples

"Going through a thoughtful management plan for every aspect of the outdoor industry would be a goal."

Saya Masso, Lands and Resource Director of Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation

"Right now, I would say guest experience and safety in Revelstoke and around the province is suffering from a lack of proactive user management."

Ian Tomm, President of Eagle Pass, Former Executive Director of Avalanche Canada, Former Executive Director of HeliCat Canada, Ski Guide

"We can do better. We definitely need to come up with some strategic planning for managing use on our trails. Especially with COVID-19, our usership is way up."

Melanie Wrigglesworth, Executive Director of Fernie Trails Alliance

"I think that's the problem with Squamish is that we advertise it as the outdoor adventure capital but there isn't really an outdoor recreation plan. There are a series of little ones but there isn't really anything comprehensive and suddenly we had it explode after so much promotion. Now we are dealing with those negative impacts."

Anonymous

6. Limited Research and Data

"We are pretty certain about this, but we can't exactly measure it," is a comment sentiment that arose when interviewees spoke about impacts. Interviewees described observing impacts but not having official measurements. The lack of research and data was described as a barrier to, economic development, fundraising efforts, understanding wildlife impacts, and understanding the carrying capacity of outdoor spaces.

"The answer is we don't know yet, but we are starting to develop studies to measure that. We are setting up surveys to get qualitative data and instruments to try to get quantitative data."

Dave Richards, Operation Director of Nonstop Ski and Board, Volunteer Trail Builder and first Chair of Fernie Trails Alliance, Member of Sustainable Tourism Committee

"One of the problems and challenges we have is access to data on users of our amenities."

Ingrid Bron, Director of Community Economic Development of City of Revelstoke

Research and data collection can be used to understand impacts which can inform management decisions. Interviewees explained the importance of understanding of carrying capacity - that is how many people can enter a certain area before it starts to cause measurable damages that should be mitigated.

"What is the carrying capacity of sites and trails? We know that more people increase the impacts, but oftentimes we don't know how many are going out and that makes it hard to know when the sites and trails begin to be impacted."

Lisa Cox, District Recreation Officer of Recreation Sites and Trails BC Rocky Mountain South District

7. What is Outdoor Recreation?

Even though there was a definition of outdoor recreation and the sector developed for this study (view definitions in *Appendix A*), interviewees still questioned what is considered outdoor recreation.

One point of view that emerged is that activities considered to be outdoor recreation may also be cultural practices or sustenance activities. For example, fishing and hunting may be considered sustenance activities, traditional cultural activities for Indigenous Peoples or outdoor recreation activities. Another example that was discussed was how a canoe expedition to celebrate salmon return launched by Indigenous Peoples has strong cultural elements but also a recreation side to it.

"We have lots of sustenance and recreational hunting and fishing. It might not be considered recreation in a traditional sense, but it is."

Frank Varga, General Manager of Burns Lake Community Forest

An additional perspective that emerged is the difference between outdoor recreation and part of a lifestyle. For instance, biking may be considered outdoor recreation but, in some communities, it may be a form of transportation and a part of the lifestyle.

"It's interesting the modern western idea of outdoor recreation as something we would do on the weekend. Those lines get a bit blurred on the West Coast. Some of the activities are just part of living here. It's just something you do."

Dan Law, Mayor of District of Tofino

Finally, the outdoor recreation sector was identified as an emerging and evolving sector. In some cases, people who are part of the sector may not self-identify as being part of it. For instance, a producer of specialized hunting knives may consider themselves to be part of the equipment manufacturing sector and may not have considered themselves to be in the outdoor recreation space.

"Like most emerging sectors, the outdoor recreation economy in B.C. will continually evolve as it relates to determining its scope and achieving consensus on what it encompasses."

Wendy Koh, Regional Manager of Regional Economic Operations (Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation) in the Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley Region

Limitations

There are a few things to keep in mind when interpreting these results. At the time of designing this study, there was very limited and often outdated provincial data on outdoor recreation in British Columbia. This led to a qualitatively focused design for this study. The purpose of the study is to observe and outline the impacts of outdoor recreation and not to measure the scope and severity of the impacts. Quantitative data is referenced in this study when interviewees highlighted it to support the discussion.

A limitation of this study is that there is a resort community bias. Three of the five communities selected are considered resort municipalities (Province of British Columbia, *Eligibility*). There may be more of a focus on tourism in this report than would be the case had a higher proportion of non-resort communities been selected. Furthermore, some of the resources and infrastructure present in these communities because of the tourism sector may not be available in other communities. Similarly, other communities may have challenges that were not explored here.

Another limitation of this study is that interviewees are all involved in the outdoor recreation sector. Most interviewees have a personal and professional involvement that may influence their perception of their community and of the outdoor recreation sector when compared to other community members who are less involved.

There is also a non-response bias whereby some of the interviews that were requested were denied, at times from a lack of capacity to speak with us. It is possible that the people who did not have the capacity to speak with us would have brought up different topics, perspectives, or challenges.

Finally, this study has a large scope and did not reach a saturation point. During the interview process, the number of people on the interview request outreach list continuously grew. Due to constraints, no new interviews were conducted after we had completed 25 interviews despite still having more people to speak to. Even during the final interviews new topics and challenges continued to emerge. While many topics related to outdoor recreation were explored there are still many left to further explore.



Recommendations

The recommendations provide possible next steps and solutions based on the interview data and research insights. They are focused on further investigating the influence of outdoor recreation and on addressing some of the issues that emerged.

1. Measure and Prove the Impacts of Outdoor Recreation

This study suggests that the outdoor recreation sector can have widespread positive and negative impacts on communities. However, it did not attempt to measure or definitively prove the impacts of outdoor recreation. The next recommended action is to investigate the impacts more in depth with further research. Building knowledge on the outdoor recreation sector can help communities and people better plan to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate or avoid negative impacts. This study can serve as a guide to identify new research topics.

2. Test Management Solutions

Another research area to explore is to test the effectiveness of management solutions. The study points to growing numbers of outdoor recreation users. More users are likely to lead to unintentional or intentional damage to outdoor spaces. These human-caused damages were discussed extensively in the interviews alongside suggestions for how the negative impacts may be mitigated. It is recommended that management solutions be locally tested and that their effectiveness be measured. Tracking local changes because of management solutions being implemented is important because it can help inform other management areas and communities who are experiencing similar problems. *Table 4* outlines possible management solutions to test.

Table 4: Management Solutions

Solution	Issue Addressed	Suggested Tactics
User education	Limited user knowledge	Signage, on-site educators, online information, campaigns, etc.
Dispersion	Overuse, crowding	Promotion of alternative sites, increased trails/campsites in an area
Closures	Overuse, crowding, human-caused damages	Blocking access
Monitoring	Human-caused damages,	On-site staff monitoring and educating

and active management	limited user knowledge	
Facilitate authorization processes	Volunteer burnout	Increase staff to support applicants for authorizations, review and simplify authorization requirements where possible
Carefully promote	Overuse, crowding, human-caused damages	Collaborative approach to promotion and management, promote alongside educational material, limit promotion, promote alternative sites, limit location-based promotion ¹³

3. Support Local Key Players

This study highlighted that outdoor spaces and their associated values exist because they are actively cared for. However, it also revealed that those caring for outdoor spaces, namely land managers, organized outdoor groups (volunteers), Indigenous Peoples and destination managers face challenges that can be overwhelming. It is crucial that these groups be supported so that the outdoor spaces and their benefits can continue to exist.

The work of the key players is crucial to the continued success and existence of the sector. Land managers cannot adequately manage the outdoor spaces or authorize projects without enhanced capacity. Organized groups cannot complete on-the-ground work without authorizations, funding, or volunteer capacity. Indigenous Peoples cannot consult or manage their own projects without adequate capacity and resources. Destination managers cannot deliver quality guest experiences without the active care of outdoor spaces.

The recommendation is to support local key players who are the most familiar with the local outdoor spaces and who deliver active care for them. It is recommended that there be wide provincial support for valued outdoor spaces especially when considering that outdoor spaces are not only local assets, but they are also assets to the province. The study highlighted local key players are passionate about local outdoor spaces which is a strength that should be fostered. Many of the key players are struggling to keep up with the demand, which is where provincial level support may be incredibly helpful.

¹³ For instance, not using the name of an area or site when using an image to limit traffic to site.

4. Share Knowledge

This study revealed that there are recurring patterns across the communities. There are similar benefits and problems in the communities even if the details are different. The points of similarity can serve as tools for the broader outdoor recreation sector. Sharing experiences and knowledge can help other people and communities learn from each other. A culture of information sharing may be especially helpful if there are others who have already overcome certain challenges.

5. Establish Relationships and Collaborate

Collaboration was a pattern that emerged in many of the successful outdoor recreation initiatives. Through collaboration, community members were able to better overcome some of the challenges they faced and derive more value from their projects. Throughout the study, there are examples of relationships in every part of the outdoor recreation sector. Some notable examples include

- Recreation Sites and Trails BC and BC Parks partnership agreements with volunteers
- Funding from local economic activity such as Tribal Park Allies or the Burns Lake Community Forest
- Destination Marketing Organizations redirecting resources to support outdoor recreation spaces
- Partnerships with local First Nations such as programs or memorandums of understanding

Building relationships with local stakeholders is a way that the communities recognize the interconnectedness of the sector. As this study illustrated, many of these relationships are mutually beneficial and dependent on each other. Even in cases of conflict, the interviews described that having an established relationship can help parties have productive dialogue and come to an understanding. The interview data suggests that relationships can help build trust and recognition for the different values that are in the outdoor spaces making it easier to value and respect the work of other parties. Overall, the relationships and collaborations seem to drive the sector forwards and it is recommended that they continue to be maintained and built.

6. Proactively Plan

The current model of handling issues in outdoor spaces is very reactionary. In many cases, it had to be because these are communities that have experienced early and widespread interest in outdoor recreation. It is recommended that the experiences of these communities be used as learning opportunities moving forward, and especially for communities that are looking at similarly developing their outdoor recreation sectors. This study provides a lens through which we can better plan to mitigate negative impacts and enhance benefits.



Concluding Message

The purpose of this study was to explore the impacts of outdoor recreation in B.C. communities. The study successfully identified widespread positive and negative impacts in five B.C. communities. The study illustrated that there can be many positive aspects to arise from the outdoor recreation sector but at the same time, without adequate support, there can be several negative outcomes.

It also provided a lens on how the outdoor recreation sector operates and extends. The experiences of the five research communities and the cases in this study can serve as lessons learned for communities looking to develop their own sectors. They also illustrate the different direct and indirect roles of outdoor recreation stakeholders and the different functions of the sector. For people currently in the outdoor recreation sector unfamiliar with the activities of other stakeholders, it may provide insights on what others do and avenues for collaboration.

Another important insight that emerged is that outdoor spaces and their associated values exist in these communities because they are actively cared for. There is often limited or no additional support when the load goes beyond the capacity of those caring for them. In some communities there is more support to fall back on than in others. Regardless, the limited capacity to care for some of these places can be alarming because it could mean the loss of outdoor spaces and their associated values.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions

Adventure tourism - “Outdoor activities that present the participant with risk and challenge. Adventure tourism is divided into two types: hard adventure and soft adventure” (Destination BC). Adventure tourism may also be referred to as commercial outdoor recreation and can be associated with tenured outdoor recreation activities.

Land manager (may also be recreation manager or resource manager): The land or recreation manager has a responsibility to take care of outdoor spaces. The role may be slightly different depending on the organization or government. Some examples of what is referred to as a land manager in this report include:

- Recreation Officer or Manager for Recreation Sites and Trails BC
- Acting Area Supervisor or Park Ranger for BC Parks
- Land or Resource Manager, or Guardian for Tribal Parks
- Land or Resource Manager for an Indigenous Community
- Manager for Community Forests

Organized outdoor groups: For the most part, organized outdoor recreation clubs and associations are the organized outdoor groups referred to in this report. Organized groups come together through shared interests. They form officially registered organizations and often rely on volunteers. The key feature of these groups is that they take an active role in the protection, maintenance, or development of outdoor spaces. In some cases, environmental groups may fit into this definition.

Outdoor spaces: Natural settings that are used for outdoor recreation, that add value to outdoor recreation or that have the potential to be used for outdoor recreation opportunities. Outdoor spaces in this report are commonly parks, trails and natural aquatic areas but may also include other outdoor assets such as unique view or a preserved environment.

Outdoor recreation: Activities that take place in natural settings: most commonly parks, trails, and natural aquatic areas. Not including activities that take place in highly cultivated recreation areas such as playgrounds or sports fields.

Outdoor recreation economy: Economic activity that can be linked to outdoor recreation. For example, outdoor recreation retailers or businesses that rely on outdoor recreation users.

Outdoor recreation sector: Includes any activities that can be directly linked to outdoor recreation. For example, this can include outdoor recreation gear manufacturers, outdoor recreation groups, or stewardship efforts.

Stewardship - Taking care of something, such as an area or value, with the purpose of maintaining, restoring, or improving its value. For example, stewardship may refer to environmental stewards who take care of the environment or cultural stewards who take care of cultural values.

Tourism- "According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. The term usual environment is intended to exclude trips within the area of usual residence, frequent and regular trips between the domicile and the workplace, and other community trips of routine character" (Destination BC). For this study, "traveling outside of their usual environment" will be considered "traveling outside of their municipality of primary residence".

Appendix B: Additional Community Information

	Burns Lake	Fernie	Revelstoke	Squamish	Tofino
Population (Statistics Canada, 2021)	1,659	6,320	8,275	19,497	2,516
Economic Region	Nechako	Kootenays	Thompson Okanagan	Mainland Southwest	Vancouver Island & Coast
Tourism Region	Northern BC	Kootenay Rockies	Kootenay Rockies	Vancouver Coast Mountains	Vancouver Island
Established sites of Recreation Sites and Trails BC (Province of British Columbia, <i>Recreation Sites and Trails BC - Interactive Map</i>)	Agate Point; Augier Lake; Bear Dens Trail; Binta Lake North; Binta Lake South; Boer Mountain; Colleymount; Co-Op Lake; Division Lake; Eagle Creek/Opal Beds Trail; Government Point; Guyishton Lk. Rec. Site/Trail; Indian Bay; Kager Lake; Knapp Lake (Closed) Maxan Lake; McClure Pit; Moose Lake; Noralee East; Noralee West; Nourse/ Allin Creek Trail; Omineca Ski Club; Ootsa Landing; Pinkut Lake; Richmond Lake; Takysie Lake; Taltapin Lake; Trout Lake; Uncha Lake	NA - Rocky Mountain District sites not listed	Begbie Falls; Big Eddy; Carnes Creek; Downie Creek; Eagle Bay Recreation Site; Eagle Pass Ridge; Echo Bay Mulvehill Creek; Echo Lake; Five Mile Boat Launch; Frog Falls; Mccrae Lake; Mount Begbie; Mount Begbie Campground; Mt Begbie Area; Mt. Cartier-Ghost Peak; Potlatch Creek; Shaketown; Sprague Bay; Sproat Mountain Lookout; Wadey; Wap Lake West	Anderson Beach; Brohm Lake Day Use; Brohm Lake Interpretive Forest Trails; Cat Lake; Chek Canyon Climbing Site; High Falls (5.5Km) Recreation Site; Levette Lake; Skookum Creek-Mamquam River Put-In; Squamish Riverside Campsite; Squamish-Elaho Recreation Site; Starvation Lake;	A Walk In The Forest Trail (Lost Shoe); Canoe Creek; Clayoquot Arm Beach
BC Parks and Protected Areas¹⁴ (Province of British Columbia, <i>BC Parks Map</i>)	Dead Man's Island Park; Burns Lake Park	Mount Fernie Park	No Parks within 20km	Stawamus Chief Park; Stawamus Chief Protected Area; Shannon Falls Park; Brackendale Eagles Park; Murrin Park; Baynes Island Ecological Reserve; Alice Lake Park	Epper Passage Park; Dawley Passage Park; Vargas Island Park
Parks Canada (Government of Canada, 2022)			Mount Revelstoke National Park		Pacific Rim National Park is in the region

¹⁴ Parks as far as 20km away from the community.

Appendix C: Interview List

	Interviewees	Organization or Government	Role
5 Anonymous Interviewees			
Burns Lake	Dolores Funk	Village of Burns Lake	Economic Development Officer Former Mayor
	Frank Varga	Burns Lake Community Forest	General Manager
	Nicole Gerow	Snowmobile Club Rod & Gun Club Search and Rescue Society Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation	Board Member Board Member Board Member First Nation Band Member
	Patti Dube	Ride Burns Lakes District Secondary Various	President PE Teacher Coach & Instructor
Fernie	Dave Richards	Nonstop Ski and Board Fernie Trails Alliance Sustainable Tourism Committee	Operations Director Volunteer Trail Builder (1 st Chair) Member
	Jikke Gyorki	Tourism Fernie	Executive Officer
	Lisa Cox	Recreation Sites and Trails BC	District Recreation Officer (Rocky Mountain South)
	Melanie Wrigglesworth	Fernie Trails Alliance	Executive Director
	Robyn Peel	Community Futures East Kootenay	Community Economic Development Coordinator
Revelstoke	Cat Moffat	City of Revelstoke	Economic Development Coordinator
	Ian Tomm	Eagle Pass (Current) Avalanche Canada (Past) HeliCat Canada (Past) Various	President Former Executive Director Former Executive Director Ski Guide
	Ingrid Bron	City of Revelstoke	Director of Community Economic Development
	Kevin Eskelin	Recreation Sites and Trails BC	Regional Manager (Southern Interior East)
	Robyn Goldsmith	Tourism Revelstoke	Destination and Sustainability Manager

		Revelstoke Cycling Association Revelstoke Women's Enduro Other	Volunteer Board Member Volunteer Race Organizer Mountain Bike Coach
Squamish	Ian Lowe	Squamish Off-Road Cycling Association	Executive Director Former Board Member
	Kate Mulligan	District of Squamish	Economic Development Officer
	Kieran Brownie	Squamish Access Society	Board Member
	Matt Parker	Squamish Trails Society	President
	Wendy Koh	Ministry of Jobs, Economic Development and Innovation (Regional Economic Operations)	Regional Manager (Lower Mainland/Fraser Valley Region)
Tofino	Dan Law	District of Tofino	Mayor
	Luke Clarke	Recreation Sites and Trails BC	District Recreation Officer (Sunshine Coast - South Island)
	Saya Masso	Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation	Lands and Resource Director
Note: There were twenty-five interviews and twenty-seven interviewees as some interviews had a few participants.			

Appendix D: Interview and Pre-Interview Survey Questions

Questions numbered 3 to 18 were also the pre-interview survey questions. In the pre-interview survey, interviewees were asked to answer with YES, NO, or I DON'T KNOW. Interview questions were prioritized based on their answers.

In addition to questions 3 to 18, the pre-interview survey also asked interviewees to rank their level of knowledge on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=very little knowledge, 5=a great deal of knowledge).

- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you describe your level of knowledge on the outdoor recreation economy?
In this study, the outdoor recreation economy is defined as economic activity that can be linked to outdoor recreation. For example, outdoor recreation retailers or businesses that rely on outdoor recreation users.
- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you describe your level of knowledge on the topics about community well-being?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you describe your level of knowledge on the topics about the environment?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you describe your level of knowledge on the topics about equity?

Interview Questions

General

1. Tell me about yourself and your involvement in the outdoor recreation sector in your community.
 - a. PROMPT: Are there any outdoor recreation projects or initiatives you have been a part of?
 - b. PROMPT: Is your involvement in a personal or professional capacity, or both?
2. Can you describe the role that the outdoor recreation sector plays in your community?

Economic

3. Are there new businesses that have emerged in your community because of the outdoor recreation sector?
4. Are there businesses that depend on the outdoor recreation sector in your community?
5. Are there new job opportunities in your community because of the outdoor recreation sector?
6. Are there remote workers relocating to your community because of the outdoor recreation sector?
7. Do your community's outdoor recreation assets (such as parks, trails, waterways, etc.) attract tourists to participate in outdoor recreation activities in your community?

*EXTRA: Can you think of any other economic impacts of the outdoor recreation sector

for your community?

Community Well-being

8. Does the outdoor recreation sector have an impact on the physical health of members of your community?
9. Does the outdoor recreation sector have an impact on the mental health of members of your community?
10. Does the outdoor recreation sector impact the educational opportunities in your community?
11. Does the outdoor recreation sector have an impact on social connections in your community?
12. Does the outdoor recreation sector provide reasons for people to move to or stay in your community?
13. Does the outdoor recreation sector impact the overall quality of life of your community?
14. Does the outdoor recreation sector impact your community's resilience to change or challenges?

*EXTRA: Do you have other examples of how outdoor recreation impacts community wellbeing?

Equity

15. Is there Indigenous community involvement in the outdoor recreation sector in your community?

Examples of Indigenous community involvement may be:

- Agreements/protocols
- Indigenous led projects
- Consultations with Indigenous governments
- Indigenous involvement in trail/park development, clubs, or events
- Other

16. Are there any inclusive access outdoor recreation initiatives such as participation for under-represented groups?

Examples of under-represented groups may be

- Women
- People with disabilities
- Racialized minorities
- LGBTQ2+ individuals
- Low income households
- Other

*EXTRA: Do you think everybody in your community is equally able to participate and access outdoor recreation opportunities? Is there a group of people who are not?

Environment

17. Has the outdoor recreation sector inspired or promoted environmental stewardship or conservation in your community?
 18. Has your community faced environmental challenges caused by the outdoor recreation
-

sector?

*EXTRA: Do you have other examples of how outdoor recreation impacts the natural environment in your community?

Additional Questions (if time allows)

19. Are there key players that help outdoor recreation thrive in your community?
 - a. PROMPT: Why are they 'champions'?
 20. What barriers or challenges exist in your community to growing the outdoor recreation sector?
 21. What opportunities do you see with regards to the outdoor recreation sector in your community?
-

Wrap up

22. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?
 23. Who should I talk to next?
-

Appendix E: Learning Opportunities Mentioned

Burns Lake

- 6 weeks trail construction program for high-school students
- Spirit North
- Ride Burns kids' mountain bike camp
- Local college is working with the Burns Lake Native Development Corporation to provide an adventure tourism program.

Fernie

- User education (e.g., Leave no Trace) through sustainable tourism pilot project
- Educational signage for fairy creek trail (Elk River alliance and Recreation Sites and Trails BC project)
- Outdoor adventure courses like skiing and mountain biking
- Outdoor programs in schools
- Fernie Trails Alliance leadership skills groups for trail building and design with secondary school students
- Elk River Alliance and Wildsight BC work with kids' education
- College of the Rockies, Mountain Adventure Skills Training and Adventure Tourism Business Operations Certificate
- Elementary school's outdoor programs
- Avalanche training

Revelstoke

- Workshops for community trail groups and trail builders
- Land management implications
- Guide training
- Avalanche Training (Revelstoke is home to Avalanche Canada)
- Alpine Club of Canada programs for low-income youth

Squamish

- Squamish youth mountain bike program
- Love it to Death campaign
- Sustainable trail building and land management practices learned through organizational leadership
- Training opportunities for BC Parks partnership agreement holders
- Instructional groups
- Guiding
- Kids camps and coaching programs
- Squamish River Watershed Society conduct outreach and education with kids in the school district
- Phoenix Magnet Academy outdoor experiential education
- Capilano University had an outdoor recreation leadership program (Not currently active. Capilano University plans to open a new Squamish campus.)

Tofino

- Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Guardians conduct monitoring and education
 - Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks Guardians are formally trained. They partake in a SVOP course, accredited environmental monitoring programs, wilderness first aid course, and stream keepers course
 - Outdoor recreation was mentioned as part of elementary and high school (Ucluelet) curriculum. For example, high school students can pursue kayak guide training.
 - West Coast NEST, a regional education tourism collaboration led by Clayoquot Biosphere trust
 - Stewardship tourism opportunities
-

Appendix F: Accessibility Initiatives Mentioned

Burns Lake

- Accessible camping such as the downtown beach area

Fernie

- Accessible trails
- Fernie Valley Pathway Project (Fernie Trails Alliance and City of Fernie are building an active transportation network of multi-use and accessible trails)
- Cycling Without Age
- Initiatives from the resort such as chairlifts for disabled skiers
- Fernie Adaptive Snowsports

Revelstoke

- Adaptive trails, accessible staging areas, and accessible campsites (Specifically mentioned were Mount Macpherson and Begbie Falls)
- Revelstoke Adaptive Sports Program
- Revelstoke Cycling Association builds accessible trails

Squamish

- Canadian Adaptive Climbing Society
- Squamish Trails Society and Accessibility Committee work to make trails accessible
- Wheelchair accessible climbing craig

Tofino

- Special access beach chairs (championed by a highschooler and now taken on by the City)
- Wheelchair accessible trails
- Beach ramps for beach access

Appendix G: Inclusivity Initiatives Mentioned

Burns Lake

- Spirit North
- Foundry (not yet built) is considering outdoor recreation programming
- 50% or more of the participants in the snowmobile club are Indigenous
- Babes in Balance, mountain bike festival for women by Ride Burns run for about 10 years
- Indigenous Art to be installed on Ride Burns trails
- Indigenous led fishing derbies

Fernie

- Mighty Moose Dragathon (to raise fund for Elk Valley Suicide Task Force)
- Women mountain biking programming and groups (e.g., Women on Wheels)
- Women ski groups

Revelstoke

- Women mountain bike group
- Colour the Slopes, 4-day summit in 2022 in partnership with Tourism Revelstoke and the Revelstoke Mountain Resort
- Open Mountains Projects (ski touring and climbing for LGBTQ+)
- GBA+ analysis in government (Recreation Sites and Trails BC)
- Heli-skiing sector has a First Nations engagement framework
- City of Revelstoke hired an Indigenous Liaison
- Alpine Club of Canada has programming for low income youth
- Ski club and other clubs promote youth access (e.g., through access to gear)
- Mountaineering courses and other programs for low-income households

Squamish

- Squamish Youth Mountain Bike Program
- Indigenous Women Outdoors
- Indigenous Life Sports Academy
- SORCA and Squamish Nation memorandum of understanding (MOU)
- Squamish Access Society working on a MOU
- Queer community climbing event
- Van Queer Climbers
- Mountain Mentors
- Colour the Trails
- Squamish youth snowboard and ski group

Tofino

- Surf Sisters (surf shop catered to women)
- Multiple initiatives to involve Indigenous People

Appendix F: Image Credits

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