CHAPTER 1

Introduction: revisiting common ground

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**Introduction**

Indigenous cultures have become a powerful attraction for tourists and as such they have drawn the attention of tourism entrepreneurs, government agencies and academics. Since the publication of *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (Butler and Hinch, 1996) over a decade ago, debates about indigenous tourism have flourished including those as fundamental as whether indigenous tourism represents an opportunity for indigenous people to gain economic independence and cultural rejuvenation to whether it presents a major threat of hegemonic subjugation and cultural degradation. A parallel range of opinions exist at operational levels inclusive of debates about the size of indigenous tourism markets, the appropriateness of various marketing practices and the business models that are most suitable for indigenous tourism operations. The continued existence of these debates is due in part to an ever-changing world environment characterized by powerful forces for the integration of indigenous people into a global culture on one hand while encouraging indigenous communities to protect and enhance local advantages that may give them a competitive advantage in this global economy on the other (Notzke, 2006). For indigenous people, the essence of this advantage lies in their distinctive cultures and in the increasing fascination of non-indigenous people in things indigenous.

Given the complexities of globalization, indigenous cultures and tourism, the range of debate that surrounds indigenous tourism is not surprising. The reality is that there are a range of both opportunities and threats that indigenous people may encounter if they choose to become involved in tourism. The exact blend of these opportunities and threats tend to be unique in time and space although some common patterns and themes exist. They are influenced both by external factors over which indigenous people have little control and by internal factors over which indigenous people have at least some opportunity to influence.

This book is meant to build on the 1996 publication of *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples*. While that publication tended to focus on the impacts of the involvement of indigenous people in tourism, this volume is meant to explore the dynamics of their active involvement. In order to fulfill this objective, a broad range of scholars with active programs in indigenous tourism were invited to contribute and were encouraged to capture indigenous voices in their contributions. The articulation of these voices was perhaps easier for those authors who were in fact indigenous (see bibliographies), but non-indigenous authors have incorporated direct native voices where possible and have done their best to accurately interpret indigenous perspectives albeit with inescapable cultural filters. These non-indigenous contributions are not seen as a limitation of the book in as much as they reflect the cross-cultural reality of indigenous tourism both in terms of the typical host–guest relationship and in terms of the operational environment in which indigenous tourism operates.

In re-establishing the common ground for this book, the introductory chapter of the 1996 publication of *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* is revisited and
modified to reflect an evolving understanding of indigenous tourism, a new set of authors, and an increased focus on the dynamics of the active involvement of indigenous people in tourism. The rationale for indigenous tourism opens the chapter followed by a discussion of the definition of indigenous tourism as employed by the editors. These sections draw heavily upon Hinch and Butler (1996). They are followed by the presentation of an indigenous tourism system model that represents a significant departure from the framework presented in 1996 as it captures emerging perspectives on the cultural underlay upon which indigenous tourism lies. Finally, the topical structure of the book is presented along with concluding comments.

**Rationale for indigenous tourism**

Western-based economic rationale remains the primary motivation for engaging in the business of indigenous tourism. Essentially, tourism is seen as a way to address the many economic, social and cultural challenges facing indigenous people (IUOTO, 1963; Zinder, 1969; UN, 1999). The essence of this argument is that income generated through tourism represents a fair exchange of value for value between indigenous and non-indigenous people. It is argued that increased economic independence will be accompanied by a higher degree of self-determination and cultural pride as the shackles imposed by poverty and social welfare are broken. In contrast to many other forms of economic activity, such as clear cutting timber from traditional indigenous lands in rain forest regions, appropriately managed tourism is seen as a sustainable activity that is generally consistent with indigenous values about the sanctity of the land and people’s relationship to it. Moreover, from an economic perspective, indigenous people are seen as having a competitive tourism advantage based on their unique cultures (Notzke, 2004), the fundamental place of hospitality within many of these cultures (McIntosh et al., 2002) and their increasingly valuable traditional lands (Stevens, 1997). A symbiotic relationship is possible to the extent that cultural survival contributes to economic success and economic success contributes to cultural survival. Notwithstanding this apparent convergence of interests between indigenous and non-indigenous components in the tourism industry, there remain several fundamental issues that challenge the long-term viability of indigenous tourism initiatives (see concluding chapter).

The participation of indigenous people in tourism is also driven by the belief that such cross-cultural interaction promotes understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous people (D’Amore, 1988). This argument assumes that much of the harm that has been perpetrated by dominant societies on indigenous people has been, and continues to be, based on ignorance. From this perspective, increased exposure to non-indigenous people in the positive circumstances associated with tourism increases the mainstream population’s understanding and appreciation of the plight of indigenous peoples. Similarly, indigenous people are advantaged by their glimpse of a more humanistic dimension of their non-indigenous counterparts. In
both cases, indigenous and non-indigenous participants disseminate their new knowledge throughout their home communities. Increased understanding results in changed attitudes and behaviors that lead, in turn, to a more just and equitable relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (D’Amore, 1988). In contrast to many other types of contact, the fact that tourism can be planned and managed implies that indigenous people can influence the nature of the economic and cultural exchange. Based on the centrality of the cultural attraction and increased indigenous ownership, indigenous people can, at least in theory, negotiate their involvement in tourism from a position of strength.

Critics of indigenous tourism would argue that the rationale just described is fallacious or at the very least, naïve. Early critics of tourism development pointed out that the industry was dominated by outside interests who retained most of the benefits and left the host destinations to suffer the costs (e.g., Bryden, 1973; Turner and Ash, 1975; MacCannell, 1976; De Kadt, 1979). Over the past two decades, however, ecotourism activities (Fennell, 1999; Weaver, 2001, community-based approaches (Murphy, 1985), and more generally, sustainable approaches (Sofield, 2003) have gained popularity. These approaches attempt to mitigate the negative impacts of tourism and accentuate the positive ones with the goal of ensuring a net positive impact along with a fair distribution of these impacts. Clearly, however, this nirvana has yet to be achieved and there are systemic causes for this failure (Mowforth and Munt, 1998). Rather than suggesting that there is a magic set of principles or strategies that can provide a universal guarantee of success in the context of indigenous tourism, the contributing authors in this book examine indigenous tourism in the unique contexts of place and time. They adopt critical scholarly perspectives, attempt to reflect native voices in their work and try to make sense of complex situations and events related to tourism and indigenous peoples.

Questions of definition

A variety of terms are used in the literature to describe the different groups that fall under the indigenous concept adopted in this book. A sampling of terminology includes Indian (Csargo, 1988; Hollinshead, 1992), Aboriginal (Altman, 1989; Altman and Finlayson, 1993; Parker, 1993), native (Tourism Canada, 1988), indigenous (Ryan and Aicken, 2005) and first nations (Reid, 1993). In certain contexts broader terms such as cultural (Robinson and Boniface, 1999) and ethnic (Swain, 1993) tourism have also been used to encompass the indigenous tourism dimensions in whole or in part. Over the past 10 years, however, there has been a general coalescing of terms in the tourism literature with the most frequent references being to Aboriginal and indigenous peoples. The choice of a particular term is normally based on: the geographic context, the specific group that is the focus of the publication and the way that this group refers to their own ethnicity, and the sensibilities of the target audience for the publication.

While the terminology used by each author in this collection varies according to the nuances of the study or argument being presented, the
umbrella term of indigenous tourism is used by the editors of this volume. It should be noted, however, that the term indigenous is also contested which is not surprising given the distinctive rights and restrictions that indigenous peoples face throughout the world. In contrast to the more general definition of indigenous used by Butler and Hinch (1996) and in keeping with other recent publications on this topic (e.g., Ryan and Aicken, 2005), the definition for indigenous provided by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (http://www.undp.org/csopp/NewFiles/ipadoutdef.html) has been adopted. In essence, classifying a group as indigenous implies that this group was present and occupied a given area prior to the creation of modern states and borders. Indigenous groups are also typically seen to be distinct in terms of their cultural and social identities and institutions relative to dominant groups in society. Key characteristics include:

(i) self-identification and identification by others as being part of a distinct indigenous cultural group, and the display of desire to preserve that cultural identity;
(ii) linguistic identity different from that of the dominant society;
(iii) social, cultural, economic, and political traditions and institutions distinct from the dominant culture;
(iv) economic systems oriented more toward traditional systems of production than mainstream systems;
(v) unique ties and attractions to traditional habitats and ancestral territories and natural resources in these habitats and territories.

(United Nations Development Program, 2004)

One of the limitations of this definition is that culture is dynamic and while the UNDP definition emphasizes tradition, it must also be recognized that there is an ever-changing contemporary dimension to these groups that does not invalidate their indigenous status although it may complicate it. The use of ‘indigenous’ in this book is therefore meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive. While some readers may prefer tighter parameters they will hopefully be receptive to the common cultural, economic, environmental and political issues that are faced by groups who are both at the core and on the peripheries of this definition.

Indigenous tourism refers to tourism activities in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction. The factor of control is a key in any discussion of development (an issue referred to again in the concluding chapter). Whoever has control or exercises power generally determines such critical factors as the scale, pace, nature, and indeed, the outcomes of development. Similarly, given the centrality of attractions in tourism, the extent to which the attraction is a manifestation of indigenous culture is also a primary indicator of indigenous tourism. Figure 1.1 illustrates these two key dimensions by way of a matrix. The horizontal axis represents the range of control that indigenous people have over a given tourism activity. At the left
end of the continuum indigenous groups have no control at all, while at the right end they have total control in terms of ownership and management interests. In between these extremes, a number of graduations exist including the participation of indigenous people as employees, advisory board members, and formal partners in development. The vertical axis represents the degree to which the tourist attraction is based on indigenous culture. These themes range from being focused totally on indigenous culture to a complete absence of an indigenous theme.

Tourism enterprises which are both controlled by indigenous people and which feature an indigenous themed attraction clearly fall within the scope of the definition for indigenous tourism (culture controlled). Just as clearly, tourism activity which is neither controlled by indigenous people nor which features an indigenous theme, lies outside the purview of this book (non-indigenous tourism) and it should be recognized that this type of activity dwarfs the volume of activity in the other three quadrants in actual practice. Tourism enterprises which are controlled by indigenous interests but which do not feature a central attraction that is based on indigenous culture represent part of the middle ground between the two extremes just noted (diversified indigenous). Examples of this type of activity include casinos owned by indigenous groups (see chapter by Carmichael and Jones, Editors’ Note) or ecotourism enterprises like Whale Watch Kaikoura (Curtin, 2003) which emphasizes a western-based marine biology interpretative presentation but is owned by the Maori interests. While the costs and benefits of running these operations obviously has a direct impact on indigenous peoples, the values, management styles and unique legal rights of these groups may also have a bearing on the nature of the tourism experience that is produced as well as the sustainability of the enterprise. Finally, there is a substantial level of tourism activity that is developed around indigenous attraction themes but in which indigenous people themselves have little or no controlling interest (Culture

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**Figure 1.1**
Indigenous tourism defined (Hinch and Butler, 1996, p.10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous control</th>
<th>Indigenous theme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Absent</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture dispossessed</th>
<th>Culture controlled</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-indigenous tourism</td>
<td>Diversified indigenous</td>
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Dispossessed). Activities that fall into this latter category have become increasingly controversial and generate heated debates about cultural expropriation, indigenous intellectual property rights and copyright infringement.

The indigenous tourism system

There are a variety of components and relationships that underpin indigenous tourism. In reality, each indigenous tourism experience is unique in terms of time, space and participants. A similar claim could be made of virtually all types of tourism experiences but to hide behind this fact is to ignore common, albeit not universal, patterns which exist and which provide insight into a variety of issues that arise in the context of indigenous tourism.

Hinch and Butler (1996) presented a framework for indigenous tourism that served to highlight some of the key components of indigenous tourism but it was of limited value in terms of identifying the relationships between these components. The revised model presented in Figure 1.2 is meant to address this shortcoming and to highlight the central role of culture as a dynamic within this system. It has been influenced by a variety of sources including the basic geographic dimension of Leiper’s (1990) tourism system and the important role of media as highlighted by Ryan and Trauer (2005) (see chapter by Ryan, Chang and Huan, Editors’ Note). At the heart of this system, the indigenous destination hosts are involved in cross-cultural interactions and filters with generating region visitors, indigenous destination hosts, and other major players such as tourism trade, governments, and media. The economic environment, social environment, and political environment interact with these components.
model is the basic travel dynamic between the generating region where the tourists reside and the destination region where the hosts, in this case the indigenous hosts, are found. By definition, there is a physical flow of tourists from the generating region to the indigenous destination and back again (Leiper, 1990). This flow in human traffic is accompanied by a variety of additional flows including financial resources, information and images. While the heavily marked arrows on the model symbolize an equal flow of tourists traveling to the destination area and then back home, the ancillary flows are not necessarily equal and therein lie many of the controversies surrounding indigenous tourism. In general, the intent of the hosts is to have a net inflow of money into the destination and to export positive images of the destination and themselves.

One of the distinguishing features of an indigenous tourism system relative to a tourism system in general is the emphasis on culture. In the Culture Controlled quadrant of Figure 1.2 there is often a very conscious intent to feature, and indeed commodify, the ‘otherness’ of the hosts as the essence of the attraction. Variations of such cultural attractions are limitless but include: interpretive centers, performances, festivals, home-stays, guided tours and a range of other offerings that feature indigenous culture that is in some way packaged and sold to the visitors. But the cultural overlay found in the indigenous tourism system is much more encompassing than its tangible manifestation in a culturally based attraction. It is also reflected in basic values and principles that are infused in the way an enterprise is operated. An example of this would be the unique forms of hospitality found in indigenous destination communities.

There are multiple cultures interacting in an indigenous tourism context. Basic categories of these cultures include those associated with: (1) the host indigenous culture found in a specific destination; (2) the mainstream culture that dominates the national–political region in which the destination exists; (3) the global culture that increasingly characterizes the international and national tourism industries of which the indigenous tourism industry is but a part and (4) the multiple cultures that make up the international market for indigenous tourism. Each of these cultural groups can again be broken down into a multitude of cultural components. For example, often the indigenous hosts will consist of a complex array of tribal and family groups. As a result of this cultural complexity, there are a variety of filters that come into play during any of the multiple interactions that occur in indigenous tourism. These filters are used by the interacting individuals to understand and interpret the multiple values and practices that characterize indigenous tourism interactions. Moreover, these cultural filters are unique for each participant. As a result of this cultural complexity, indigenous tourism tends to require more complex negotiation than many other types of tourism.

While the main players in indigenous tourism are the tourists and the hosts, a number of other influential groups exist. Leading this group are the various intermediaries that make up the travel trade. Key elements include: (1) travel agents in the origin; (2) transportation companies that facilitate the physical travel of the tourist and (3) outbound and inbound tour operators...
that develop a range of tour packages. The travel trade is dominated by an increasingly global culture that operates at a worldwide scale and responds to shareholder interests. Operators who specialize in indigenous tourism represent a very small segment of this group and must normally work within the operating parameters of the tourism industry as a whole if they hope to remain solvent. Governments also tend to be active participants in indigenous tourism. Their involvement is found in the normal tourism functions – often concentrated in the area of marketing – of national, state and local governments but is especially noteworthy compared to that in other forms of tourism due to the active participation of government agencies with mandates in development or addressing the needs of indigenous peoples. These government agencies often see tourism as a potential agent for indigenous economic and social development and actively support indigenous tourism through policy initiatives, consultant services and financial assistance. Media, in all of its manifestations, is also a major player in the indigenous tourism system. Because of the newsworthiness of indigenous issues, indigenous tourism tends to generate considerable attention in the media. This attention plays an important role in the development of tourist images of indigenous products and indeed the development of identity of the indigenous hosts.

The final component of the indigenous tourism system is the broader environmental context. This component of indigenous tourism system reflects the reality that tourism is not a closed system. Indigenous tourism is impacted by trends in the economic, social, political and physical world. These trends represent external influences largely beyond the control of either the indigenous or global tourism industries but which have a direct bearing on their performance. A brief examination of these factors in the context of indigenous peoples highlights key operating considerations for indigenous tourism.

Economic environment

Economic considerations are recognized as a driving force in tourism. Strong economic performance in the tourist market areas will result in higher levels of discretionary spending for travel and more trips. Weak economic performance in destination areas often results in tourism actively supported as an alternative to struggling primary or secondary industries. Mainstream governments, anxious to reverse the dependency of indigenous people on social assistance, may encourage indigenous tourism development. While a communal approach to economic development is often associated with traditional indigenous communities, the success rate of this approach has come into question in places like Australia (see chapter by Schmiechen and Boyle, Editors’ Note). Increasingly, private entrepreneurial approaches are being pursued in indigenous communities (Wuttunee, 1992; Altman and Finlayson, 1993). Such trends may reflect the growing corporatization of the global economy in combination with evolving generational differences and changing socio-political structures and programs found in indigenous communities.
Social environment

Indicators of the social demographic characteristics of many indigenous people throughout the world have contributed to the view that one of the shared features of indigenous people is the ‘culture of poverty’ in which they live (Frideres, 1988). As Goodwin points out in his chapter, ‘Poverty means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a clinic or school to go to, not having the land on which to grow one’s food or a job to earn one’s living, not having access to credit’ (IMF and IDA, 1999, p. 5). These are the conditions that indigenous peoples tend to exist in much more frequently than non-indigenous peoples. Given these depressing conditions, it is not surprising that the constraints to tourism and the resulting development goals of indigenous communities often vary from the goals of non-indigenous communities. For example, a study in Alberta, Canada found that indigenous communities are much more likely to identify tourism development objectives related to the improvement of basic infrastructure and service upgrading than are non-indigenous communities (Hinch, 1994).

Political environment

Indigenous people continue to become increasingly politically aware and active. Despite the substantial constraints that they face, indigenous people have become more informed of their legal and political rights and they have increasingly exercised them. There has been a general increase in land claim settlements, which has resulted in financial gain and increased resource management roles (Hinch, 2001). A good example of these gains in a tourism context is the growth in indigenous owned casino development throughout the US and Canada based on legal challenges by indigenous groups (Stansfield, 1996). These gains are not uniformly distributed however, as Hollinshead and Hall point out in their respective chapters in this volume. There continues to be conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Such conflict tends to suppress demand for indigenous tourism products even where the destination is far removed from the site of conflict.

Political differences are also a significant aspect of the internal politics of indigenous groups. Given the cultural diversity of indigenous people, it is not surprising that there is rarely a unified voice speaking on their behalf. The internal politics of the international, national, regional and local indigenous organizations are very dynamic and at times confusing. Such volatility is not attractive to the mainstream tourism trade, which prefers predictability and stability within its operating environments. Often there are two levels of governance in indigenous communities: one imposed by the dominant culture and one imbedded in the traditional practices of the community. Decisions made in the imposed governance structure are not always consistent with those made by traditional governing structures. Tourism operators must therefore deal with the reality of dual governing structures: one of which is an
elected body while the other looks to the traditional guidance of elders, taking into account valued communal and kinship bonds, and processes of consensus building within the community. A good example of the problems that can arise from such a situation was presented by Sofield (1996).

Natural environment

The widespread destruction of natural areas throughout the world resulting from urbanization, pollution and unsustainable agriculture and resource extraction practices is actually increasing the value of many traditional indigenous lands (Stevens, 1997). Much of the traditional indigenous land near core development areas has been lost to expropriation, and indigenous people were often displaced to peripheral places that have since gained considerable value. By virtue of their undeveloped state, these lands are increasingly being prized as scarce resources that are attractive for nature-based tourism. They are likely to increase in value if the trend of worldwide environmental degradation is not dramatically reversed.

The traditional relationship between indigenous people and the land compared to non-indigenous people and the land is also distinct (Notzke, 2006). While most indigenous people ‘believe they are conjugated inseparably with nature’ non-indigenous people tend to see the land as a resource for human use (Gray, 1991; Hollinshead, 1992).

Many attempts to integrate indigenous people into prevailing wage economies have led to their alienation from the land with its consequent negative impacts. The ongoing settlement of Aboriginal land claims in many countries has resulted in increasing indigenous control of traditional lands. Greater control of the land base has allowed indigenous people to pursue land-based tourism as an attractive compromise between involvement in a wage economy and traditional subsistence practices tied to the land. Given the importance of this environment to indigenous people, any changes in environmental quality or control have significant implications on the practice of indigenous tourism (Gardner and Nelson, 1988).

Conclusion

One of the challenges for the editors of a collected volume of papers such as this is to capture the synergies so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. A variety of strategies have been used in this volume to capture these synergies. First, approximately one third of the papers contained in this volume were written by authors who contributed to the 1996 book. The majority of these authors have revisited and updated the topics and cases that they addressed at that time. Second, the introductory chapter highlights the common ground in terms of definitions and themes that are explored in more detail in the following chapters. Third, cross-references to other chapters have been inserted by the editors where they are seen to be particularly relevant. Fourth, a concluding chapter has been added to this book, giving the editors
the opportunity to integrate the contributions of the individual chapters by highlighting the common implications, noting areas of concern not previously covered in the literature, addressing discrepancies that arise from the different contributions, and speculating on future issues and problems that bear consideration in the further development of indigenous tourism. A fifth strategy to capture the synergies of this collection of contributions is the organization of the volume into six key topical areas, each of which features a short introduction preceding each section. These sections are not exclusive but the contributions have been organized based on the editors’ view of the key themes that emerge. These sections include: (a) indigenous knowledge and tourism; (b) indigenous commerce in tourism; (c) indigenous environment and tourism; (d) indigenous culture and tourism; (e) indigenous community-based tourism and (f) indigenous tourism: policies and politics.

This chapter has established a common ground for the chapters that follow. It accomplished this by drawing on the common ground established in Tourism and Indigenous Peoples (Butler and Hinch, 1996) and by extending it to reflect the evolution of this area of study since 1996. The rationale for studying indigenous tourism and the definition of indigenous tourism employed by the editors remains consistent with that provided in the 1996 publication. However, considerable modifications have been made to the indigenous tourism system model that forms a key part of the common ground outlined in this chapter. At the heart of these modifications is an increased emphasis on the role of culture and the cultural filters that create complexity thereby giving rise to the numerous debates that characterize indigenous tourism. In many ways, the chapters that follow are manifestations of these debates. Although each contribution represents a perspective that is specific to a particular time and place, there are common underlying themes, patterns and lessons that provide insight into indigenous tourism. Therein lies the primary contribution of this book.

This volume does not provide definitive truths about indigenous tourism, as given its complexity, few universal truths exist. It does, however, provide a diverse range of examples of indigenous tourism practices and perspectives from across the globe. Yet despite the geographic, cultural and topical diversity that is exhibited, common challenges and strategies for indigenous tourism emerge. Individual contributors to this volume provide a wealth of insight in their respective areas. As the editors, we have tried to organize and discuss the chapters in a way that captures the synergistic insights found in this collection of perspectives on tourism and indigenous peoples.