



**MALASPINA**  
University-College

Endowed Chair in Tourism  
and Sustainable Rural Development  
Nanaimo B.C.

# Malaspina University-College | Nanaimo Chair in Tourism & Sustainable Rural Development

## *An Exciting Opportunity to Help Rural Communities*

The B.C. government has committed \$1.25 million to the creation of a Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo. Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops is partnering with Malaspina to coordinate the work of the Chair. Malaspina University-College must raise an additional \$1.25 million to establish the endowment to fund the Chair in perpetuity. This is an exciting opportunity to invest in the development of tourism in rural communities and in innovative training for students.

Rural communities have unique needs around developing and implementing tourism strategies, and this brochure briefly describes these challenges, the kind of research needed, as well as the strengths of Malaspina University-College to carry out this research.

### **Rural Communities in Crisis**

Many rural communities in B.C. are in crisis. Dwindling fish stocks, population decline, and trade disagreements are but a few of the problems impacting rural regions of the province. From 1989 to 1999, employment in forestry, fishing and mining decreased by 10% across British Columbia. Since then, the job losses have kept mounting. Rural communities in B.C., many of which rely on only one or two main employers, have been hit much harder than urban communities.

Once vibrant communities now struggle, as resource industries are no longer able to provide stable jobs for residents. The exodus of the young, forced to seek employment in larger cities, further erodes the critical mass that small towns need to survive. As the population base declines and ages, rural communities, handicapped by an ever-shrinking tax base, are often forced to cut services. Fewer services impact remaining residents and make it difficult to attract people and businesses to rural communities.



### **Why Rural Communities Matter**

Rural communities are essential for our future prosperity. Urban areas are becoming increasingly congested. The need for food, lumber and minerals—most of which are supplied by rural regions—continues to grow. If rural communities continue to decline, the impacts, from job losses to growing dependence on others, will be significant.

Much of British Columbia's wealth and history is in rural areas. The natural and cultural resources throughout the province, coupled with the skills of hard working people, contribute significantly to economic development. Rich heritage is found in the people, places and stories in rural areas. These resources continue to be a source of great opportunity for an emerging industry—tourism.

### **Rural Tourism: An Important Part of the Solution**

How can rural communities make successful transitions from dependence on resource-based economies? In resource-dependent communities in the Atlantic provinces and in some countries like the U.S., Australia and Costa Rica, one solution has been tourism. The Atlantic provinces, who have similarly faced job losses in resource sectors and the exodus of their youth, now lead the country with 30% growth in rural tourism employment from 1996 to 2003 (compared to approximately 16% for B.C.).

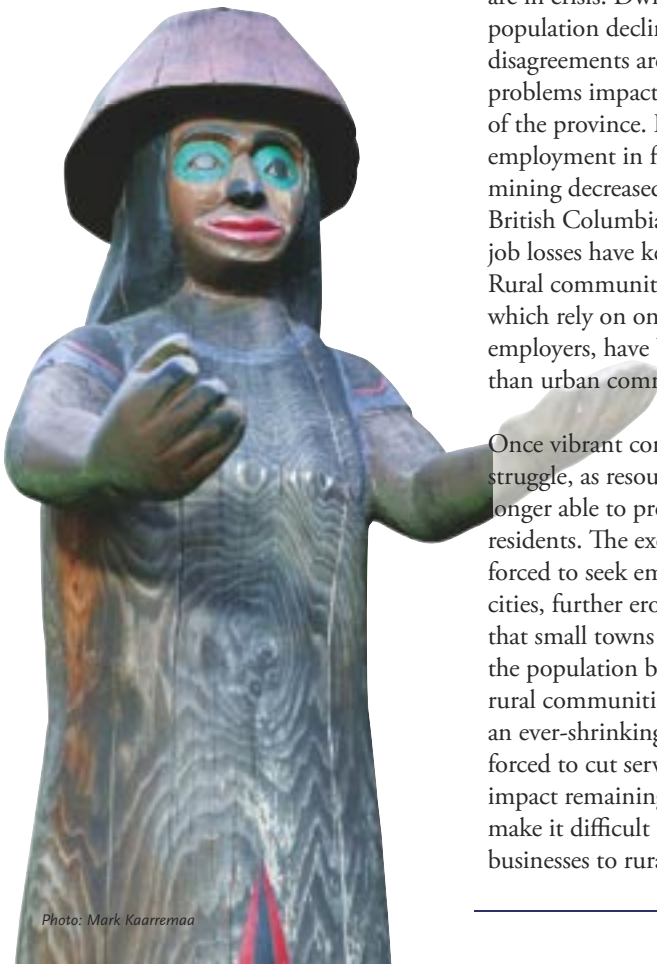




Photo: Terry Patterson



Photo: Terry Patterson

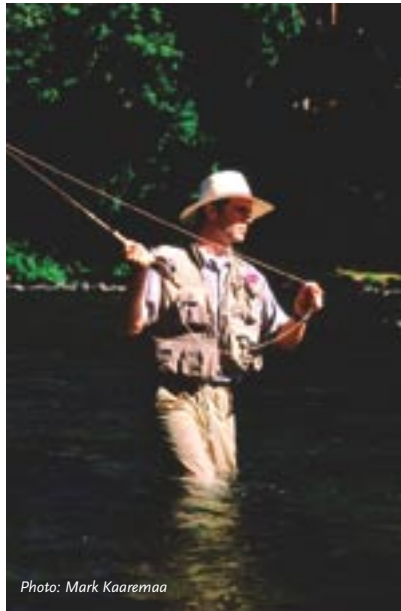


Photo: Mark Kaaremaa



Photo: Terry Patterson

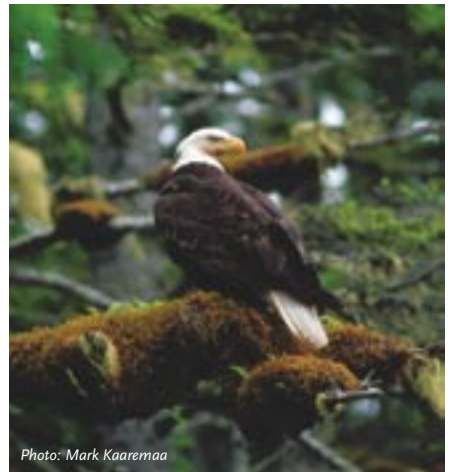


Photo: Mark Kaaremaa

*In the tourism sector, 100,000 new jobs and \$10 billion in new economic activity are expected in the next decade. If rural communities had a greater share of this market, they could fund improved local services, health care and education.*

Currently, most tourists in B.C. and Canada visit urban areas. **As witnessed in the Atlantic provinces, when rural communities have a greater share of the tourism market, they can fund improved local services, health care and education that help to ensure their survival.** The provincial government is committed to increasing tourism in all regions and doubling tourism marketing, establishing a B.C. Resort Task Force, revitalizing northern and rural transportation infrastructures, and making it easier for small businesses to access funding.

Tourism development is a complex process even in urban areas where many of the crucial factors for success such as access to trained workers and attraction strategies for tourists are already in place. **For rural communities to successfully make the transition from a primary industry to tourism, they need access to relevant research and support, and expanded training for tourism students.**

The B.C. government issued a challenge to the tourism industry to double annual revenues by 2010. Recognizing that rural communities will need extra support to realize this potential and to benefit from the Vancouver 2010 Olympics, the B.C. government has committed \$1.25 million to the creation of a Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo. **Malaspina University-College must raise an additional \$1.25 million to establish the endowment to fund the Chair position in perpetuity.**

Malaspina is uniquely qualified as a home for this Endowed Chair and to coordinate, along with Thompson Rivers University, research efforts across the Province. Malaspina is centrally located in a region that has experienced significant job loss in fishing and forestry, and Malaspina has considerable experience in applied research and assistance to rural communities. **The new Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development will help B.C. become a leader in tourism.**

## What is Rural Tourism?

Tourism opportunities in rural areas are plentiful and diverse ranging from the rugged to the luxurious, tent to resort, active to restorative. The province markets itself as “Super Natural,” an experience typically created in rural regions.

The opportunities for tourism development in rural regions expand on current experiences such as visiting traditional Haida villages in the Queen Charlottes or kayaking Desolation Sound. Wine tours, ranch vacations, guided outdoor adventures, plane tours, boat tours, spa holidays, salmon fishing, hiking, heritage sites, instructional painting or cooking holidays, golfing and diving are all additional examples of tourism



experiences offered in B.C.'s rural regions.

Well planned, sustainable tourism development can help rural areas diversify economically, create employment, redistribute wealth, attract potential residents and businesses, and conserve environmental and cultural resources.

### Why is Research Needed to Support Rural Tourism Development?

Tourism is a competitive business. British Columbia's competitors in Canada, the U.S. and internationally are actively pursuing rural tourism research and development, and student training. Alberta, for the past three years, has held an annual conference on rural tourism development, and is advancing aggressively in market awareness and product development. More knowledge creates a better product, which leads to more visitors and more jobs. B.C. needs relevant research and additional student training to be able to compete with other markets in the delivery of rural tourism.

**Tourism has the potential to contribute to the sustainability of rural communities; however, there are significant obstacles to be overcome if this potential is to be realized.**

## *The B.C. government has committed \$1.25 million to the creation of a Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo.*

- 1. Most existing research focuses on tourism in urban areas.** Yet, the urban market is quite different from that of the rural market, and is more likely to self-develop. While tourism in rural areas is also market-driven, development of tourism potential requires relevant, regional knowledge and considerable resources to succeed without making costly mistakes.
- 2. Rural tourism is poorly understood.** Rural tourism is often defined as rugged outdoor adventures, but it encompasses much more, such as enjoying views from a resort or visiting a First Nation cultural site. Research and the dissemination of knowledge will enhance the understanding of rural tourism and will assist decision-making by government, investors and tourists.
- 3. Rural tourism doesn't happen by itself.** Having a variety of potential tourism experiences does not guarantee automatic benefits from rural tourism. To be successful, rural tourism must be treated as a knowledge-based industry that uses research to fully capitalize on the comparative advantage of a location.
- 4. Lack of infrastructure.** The infrastructure and resources required by both tourists and entrepreneurs, while readily available in urban areas are usually unavailable in rural areas. This might include supportive government and regulations, a viable transportation system, trained employees and current market research.
- 5. Unique financial challenges.** The issues of cultivating entrepreneurship and finding capital in rural communities are significant. Tourism businesses in rural areas are often small, home-based operations with little capital, which find it difficult to weather slow seasons, tourism planning mistakes or natural disasters.
- 6. High level of business turnover.** It takes three to five years for a new, small tourism business to become established, and failure rates are high. This high turnover affects rural tourism's connections with the travel trade and makes it even more difficult to attract high-paying foreign visitors.
- 7. Lack of integration with other sectors.** There is little co-operation between rural tourism entrepreneurs and suppliers of related services such as the hospitality and transportation sectors.
- 8. Little is known about how sustainable tourism leads to healthy communities.** More research is required to discover the effects of sustainable tourism on the economic and social health of small communities. For instance, there is little data available to determine how many people displaced from resource-

based industries have found employment in tourism in areas where rural tourism is thriving.

**9. Sustaining natural resources.**

There are concerns in rural communities about how tourism will affect the natural resources upon which visitor experiences depend. For example, little is known about the impact of whale watching on whale populations or that of hiking on terrestrial ecosystems.

**10. Sharing resources with other industries.** More policy research is necessary to examine the interface between tourism and other local industries. For example, how can logging and hiking, or aquaculture and sport fishing co-exist in one area?

**11. Past research has been piecemeal and uncoordinated.** Past tourism research in B.C. has been generally local in scope and has lacked long-term data.

**12. Tourism education must expand.** To meet the requirements of the tourism industry, 100,000 new workers must be trained by the end of the decade. Tourism education departments can only expand their training programs to meet this need if they have access to research results from across the province.

Rural communities must be equipped with relevant knowledge to create sustainable tourism products. They need to be aware of the level of community support, the quantity and quality of subsequent employment, the types of tourism possible, potential conflicts with existing industries, and the impact of growth in visitors and revenue. Without funds or expertise, they are unlikely to obtain the relevant data needed to guide good decision-making.

**Case studies from Canada and abroad show that sustainable rural tourism programs can be successful when municipalities have access to tourism research and resources.**

**Endowed Chair a Crucial Piece of the Puzzle**

The B.C. Regional Innovation Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development at Malaspina University-College will enable an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach to the issues and challenges facing communities in developing tourism.

The Chair will be the first of its kind to address the research needs of rural tourism across the province and to build a knowledge base to advance the discipline. Recognising that the needs of Vancouver Island, for example, are different from those of the Cariboo, the Chair will conduct regionally-based tourism research to meet communities' individual needs.

Committed to both sustainable tourism and community health, the Chair will examine community identification, the nature of "rurality" and the values that communities are trying to sustain through tourism.

The work of the Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development will, in partnership with rural communities, other post-secondary institutions and researchers, help to:

- Distribute the economic benefits of tourism throughout the province;
- Enhance the experience of visitors to B.C. by facilitating quality rural tourism experiences;
- Diversify economic development of rural areas through tourism;
- Develop models for economic development to assist national rural tourism development;
- Advance the position of British Columbia's rural tourism products;
- Develop small- to mid-sized tourism organizations in rural areas;
- Facilitate successful tourism planning processes based on awareness, sound planning techniques and community involvement;
- Educate rural residents on the pros and cons of tourism development to assist them in making informed decisions;
- Share results between communities to build a broader base of rural tourism products; and,
- Link research, teaching and practice.



The major elements of the Chair's research program will include:

- Defining rural tourism and its components in the context of B.C.'s regions;
- Developing a specific statistical database for rural tourism to establish product availability, development possibilities and market information;
- Addressing the issues of intersectoral coordination between various agencies to produce a comprehensive and streamlined approach to rural tourism development;
- Working closely with industry and government to develop training provisions, quality product development, innovation and standards to maintain competitiveness;
- Assuming a leadership role to create a network of researchers in rural tourism development in B.C.;
- Examining the challenges and barriers of rural areas already pursuing tourism development; and,

*For rural communities to successfully make the transition from a primary industry to tourism, they need access to relevant research and support.*

- Determining "best practices" or case studies of rural areas to overcome the challenges of rural tourism development.

### **Malaspina's Strong Track Record in Tourism & Rural Research**

The Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at Malaspina is one of the largest in Canada with over 200 students and 11 faculty members actively engaged in applied regional research. Previous research areas include community development, leadership, parks and protected areas, planning and marketing, and research for communities making the transition to rural tourism. In May of 2005, the Department is hosting the prestigious Canadian Congress of Leisure Research with the theme of linking research and practice.

The Recreation and Tourism Research Institute at Malaspina

University-College links research with teaching, while providing learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. It facilitates faculty collaboration on projects within Malaspina and with external departments, and provides support for faculty research and professional development. The Institute provides expertise and services to the recreation and tourism industries, and has access to the Canadian Travel Survey database.

The Chair of Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development will reside in the soon to be created Malaspina School of Management in a new facility. The School of Management will encompass Recreation and Tourism, Hospitality, Business and the MBA program. The School will provide opportunities for increased interdisciplinary tourism-related research already undertaken with the departments of First Nations Studies,



Photo: John Lund

### **Capital Campaign for Chair in Tourism & Sustainable Rural Development**

#### **Project Leaders:**

**Nicole Vaugeois**, Faculty, Recreation and Tourism Management, Malaspina University-College

**Telephone:** 250.753.3245 ext. 2772

**E-mail:** vaugeois@mala.bc.ca

**Roger Prior**, Executive Director, Malaspina University-College Foundation

**Telephone:** 250.740.6217

**E-mail:** prior@mala.bc.ca

**Rick Rollins**, Faculty, Recreation and Tourism Management, Malaspina University-College

**Telephone:** 250.753.3245 ext. 2413

**E-mail:** rollins@mala.bc.ca

**Malaspina University-College**  
900 Fifth Street  
Nanaimo, BC  
V9R 5S5

**Text:** Signy Madden & Brenda Piquette

**Design:** William Knight

**Cover photo:** Mark Kaarremaa

*Printed in BC*

**Dean, School of Tourism**, Thompson Rivers University

**Telephone:** 250.371.5861

Photo: Mark Kaarremaa



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Political Science, Geography and Management.

### Important Partnerships

The Chair will enhance the strong links between Malaspina University-College, Thompson Rivers University and their partners—the tourism industry, rural communities and government—and act as a focal point for problem-based interdisciplinary research into tourism and sustainable rural development

### Post-Secondary Institutions

Malaspina has a long-standing, active partnership with other educational institutions delivering tourism education through its membership in the Tourism Educators Consortium in B.C. The Chair will take a leading role in the future development of the Consortium and in ensuring that tourism educators in B.C. support Sustainable Rural Development.

As faculty and research interests at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops complement those at Malaspina University-College, the Tourism Chair will work extensively with both institutions to advance research on tourism in the central regions of the province.

### Government & First Nations

Malaspina's Department of Recreation and Tourism Management already has faculty dedicated to research in Aboriginal tourism development. An

example of this kind of research is the work being done with the Sliammon First Nation in Powell River to design and deliver the special education and training needed to develop tourism products ready for the marketplace. The department is also working with the Cowichan Tribes as they prepare to host the 2008 North American Indigenous Games. Faculty are researching the human resource capacity needed by an aboriginal community to successfully host an event of this size and importance, and then will design and deliver

### Market trends that show potential for rural tourism

- A growing interest in heritage, tradition, authenticity and rural life.
- A desire for multiple holidays annually, with shorter breaks spent in rural areas.
- A growing interest in healthy rural lifestyles offering fresh air, activities and less stress.
- Market interest in high-tech outdoor equipment: clothing, all-terrain bikes and climbing equipment.
- A search for solitude and relaxation in a quiet natural place.
- An aging but active population retiring earlier, but living longer and travelling farther.

the appropriate event management training from an aboriginal perspective.

### Tourism & Other Industry Partners

The Chair, as part of the Recreation and Tourism Research Institute at Malaspina, will make full use of the Canadian Travel Survey database, and other databases from the Canadian Tourism Commission.

A strong collaboration between Malaspina and the Tourism Association of Vancouver Island has produced baseline data on numbers of tourists and employment in tourism. These studies and further work done by the Chair will shed light on the obstacles faced and the support needed by displaced resource workers now working in tourism.

The new Chair and other Malaspina faculty will continue their involvement with Leadership B.C., a program by the B.C. Chamber of Commerce to identify and train community leaders around the province.

The Research Chair will work with other Malaspina researchers to study the impact and interactions of tourism within and outside of the coastal zone. As an example, Malaspina has developed relationships with the B.C. Shellfish Growers Association and a number of individual growers.

## International Partnerships

Faculty at Malaspina University-College are actively involved with international partners. In the past six years, they have led research field schools to Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, Malaysia and Costa Rica. Research on rural tourism development has been undertaken in Thailand and Michigan, and current initiatives will explore rural development in Costa Rica and Iceland. The Research Chair will continue to foster partnerships at the international level to collaborate on research projects and to share knowledge gained.

## Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee will be assembled to provide guidance and act as a resource for the Chair in Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development. The Advisory Committee will meet twice a year. The Advisory Committee will:

- Develop a list of research priorities for the Chair on a yearly basis;
- Provide potential research projects for the Chair;
- Provide advice on research studies on an ad hoc basis; and,
- Communicate information, programs and potential partners to the Chair.

## Advisory Committee Members

Advisory Committee members may be drawn from a range of organizations with interests in sustainable rural development including Thompson Rivers University, B.C. Heartlands Strategy, Tourism British Columbia, Council of Tourism Associations of B.C., Aboriginal Tourism B.C., B.C. Wilderness Tourism Association, Canadian Rural Partnership Program and regional tourism marketing organizations.

## Endowment Campaign Goal & Recognition Opportunities

Malaspina has received a commitment of \$1.25 million dollars from the B.C. Leading Edge Endowment Fund (LEEF), an independent society that administers the application and review process for Chairs. An additional \$1.25 million must be raised to match LEEF's funding, all of which will be invested by Malaspina University-College in an endowment for Tourism and Sustainable Rural Development.

The Malaspina University-College Foundation, a registered charity that acts on behalf of Malaspina, will run the fundraising campaign, issue receipts for tax purposes and include donors in ongoing recognition programs. A variety of recognition opportunities are available to acknowledge financial support for the Chair.

## Current research in tourism at Malaspina

- Tourism policy development and impact in rural communities, focusing on communities in transition. An ongoing study in Ucluelet on Vancouver Island demonstrates benefits to a small community of a planned transition from a fishing and forestry economy to sustainable rural tourism.
- Tourism activities in national parks, marine tourism and parks, and pricing strategies in national and provincial parks, and provincial forests.
- Festival development and impact on host communities on Vancouver Island.
- Leadership training program development to assist rural communities to strengthen leadership capacities so they can embrace change associated with tourism development.
- Tourism labour market research to support small tourism businesses by measuring the quantity and quality of tourism employment on Vancouver Island and visitor preferences.

