

Grade 9-12: THE ECOTOURISM CHALLENGE

Students develop a plan to turn a proposed wilderness adventure company into an environmentally sustainable ecotourism business.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Related Outcomes

This lesson will contribute to the student's ability to

- work collaboratively planning and carrying out investigations, and generating and evaluating ideas;
- develop a sense of personal and shared responsibility for maintaining a sustainable environment;
- identify and describe science- and technology-based careers related to environmental science;
- project the personal, social, and environmental consequences of a proposed action.

Related Coursework

This lesson works well in classes studying

- the impact of human activity on the environment;
- careers related to environmental sciences and studies;
- sustainability;
- economic development and the local culture and economy.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

During this lesson, students will

- contrast different types of tourism in terms of environmental and social impact;
- define ecotourism and discuss the 7 principles of ecotourism;
- develop strategies based on the 7 principles of ecotourism for making the proposed business an environmentally sustainable ecotourism venture;
- explore environmental careers related to sustainable communities, human use, and communication.

Total Time 60 minutes

Material Required

- The Ecotourism Challenge handout (one per student)
- Copies of the occupational profiles listed in My EnviroConcerns Ecotourism, plus aboriginal liaison and clean energy researcher from the EnviroCareers section of the Aboriginal EnviroCareers website/CD-ROM (one per group)
- Overhead projector and a transparency of the My EnviroConcerns Ecotourism from the Select-A-Career section of the Aboriginal EnviroCareers website/CD-ROM
- Overhead transparency of The Real Polar Bear Express (master provided)

DELIVERY



TIME

10 minutes



PROCESS

1. **Introduction: Contrasting Impacts of Conventional Tourism and Ecotourism** (*Discussion*)
 - 1.1 Display My EnviroConcerns Ecotourism sheet on the overhead for class to read. Discuss
 - key environmental and social issues related to the tourism industry identified in Ecotourism;
 - the difference between conventional and eco tourism;
 - examples of each type of tourism and their specific environmental and social impacts;



TEACHER'S NOTES

- To print My EnviroConcerns: Ecotourism, go to My EnviroConcerns in the Select-A-Career section of Aboriginal EnviroCareers website/CD-ROM.
- 1.1 Key issues: Development, increased seasonal population, and economic activity resulting from tourism frequently destroy wildlife and their habitats,



30 minutes



1.2 Summarize ecotourism: "Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas focused on minimizing harm to the environment and contributing to the local economy."

2. **Main Activity: Developing Ecotourism Strategies for the Proposed Company** (*Case Study*)

2.1 Divide class into groups of three or four. Introduce activity: "Your challenge is to turn the Polar Bear Express, a proposed wilderness adventure company, into an environmentally sustainable ecotourism business in the next 20 minutes."

2.2 Distribute The Ecotourism Challenge handout and occupational profiles.

2.3 Explain: "The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) has defined seven principles that individuals or businesses must follow to be considered ecotourist." Briefly review the seven principles described in the student handout.

2.4 Describe the assignment further

- a. "Develop a strategy and plan based on these seven principles to make Polar Bear Express an ecotourist wilderness adventure company. Use the handout provided."
- b. "Also use the occupational profiles for related environmental careers provided to identify potential ecotourism strategies. Incorporate ideas based on at least three occupations."
- c. "Present your plan to the class by describing
 - your plan overview and how it met the seven principles;
 - top ecotourism strategy and its benefits;
 - two environmental occupations essential to realizing the plan."



pollute land and water, displace local people, and marginalize traditional economies.

2.4.b For example, from the profile for the occupation Green Architect, students might identify building an environmentally friendly building using natural and recycled materials as a strategy for minimizing impact.

Evaluation Considerations

During presentation, did students

- describe at least two environment-related careers;
- address all seven principles of sustainable tourism;
- demonstrate understanding of how occupation-related skills and expertise apply to real life challenges;
- project the potential environmental and social impacts of the proposed business?



SUGGESTIONS FOR ADAPTATION

- To adapt this lesson for Grades nine or ten, have students research a tourism related venture developed by an Aboriginal community or person, preferably in or around the students' community. Have students interview a company representative about the potential environmental impacts of the business; environmentally sustainable strategies implemented; and types of environmental expertise, i.e. occupations, they relied on.



THE ECOTOURISM CHALLENGE

Your Challenge

Develop a plan to make Polar Bear Express an environmentally sustainable ecotourism business.

Make sure your plan:

- Addresses the seven ecotourism principles defined by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES)
- Incorporates the expertise of at least three environmental professionals from the Aboriginal EnviroCareers occupational profiles provided
- Considers the potential environmental and social impacts of the venture

The Situation

Proposed Company: Polar Bear Express, a wilderness adventure company

Their Opportunity: The pristine wilderness, the abundance of water fowl and the unique mammals like polar bears and beluga whales make Hudson Bay a dream for naturalists, wildlife and outdoor enthusiasts. People from around the world, mainly Europe, are very attracted to this image.

Their Product: A five-day round trip from southern Ontario to see the polar bears, whales and wolves of Polar Bear Provincial Park on Hudson Bay. The fly-in packages are offered during July and August.

The Rules: TIES 7 Principles of Ecotourism

Source: TIES: <http://www.ecotourism.org>

Ecotourism is the "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." Therefore, those companies implementing and participating in ecotourism activities should ensure their business:

1. Minimizes impact on the environment and local people
2. Builds environmental and cultural awareness and respect
3. Provides positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
4. Provides direct financial benefits for conservation
5. Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people
6. Raises sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate
7. Supports international human rights and labour agreements

Blackline Master: The Real Polar Bear Express

The Polar Bear Express is based on a real company called, Polar Bear Park Expeditions (PBPE). PBPE provides 5-day round-trip tours to the Polar Bear Provincial Park in Northern Ontario during July and August. During the tour, tourists see the bears, whales and wolves of Hudson Bay. Tourists also learn something about the culture, history and lifestyle of the Cree people in the area. PBPE partners, Free Spirit Air Adventures fly tourists in from southern Ontario.

Environmental And Social Challenges Facing PBPE

1. Establishing a camp in the tundra without disrupting wildlife habitats, wildlife, plant life or the landscape
2. Installing a security fence to protect guests, without blocking wildlife movement
3. Increasing the presence of people without disrupting the delicate tundra ecosystem
4. Providing access to remote area without constructing permanent transportation routes
5. Respecting the local people's livelihood and culture, while sharing it with outsiders.

PBPE's EcoTourism Strategies

- Directing its profits back to the community to build a healthy local economy
- Building four conical "wooden tepees" on the grounds of the owner's house to accommodate visitors
- Incorporating a cultural part of the experience with traditional Swampy Cree stories and teachings
- Enforcing a "no trace camping" policy
- Modifying the airplane to land on the tundra instead of building a permanent runway
- Limiting tour groups to four people at a time to minimize impact on the ecosystem
- Employing 19 local people from June to November, which is significant in a small community of fewer than 300 people
- Providing a market for development of other local economic opportunities, such as the selling of local handicrafts to PBPE tourists
- Providing a basis for rebuilding traditional culture through the process of developing new tourism options and destinations in the area.

"Eco-tourism makes people more aware of the need to conserve nature and preserve what I see as my birthright and that of my children. So if our safaris also generate a livelihood for our people, then it's win-win for everyone."

-Sam Hunter, Polar Bear Park Expeditions

Source: Aboriginal Business Canada http://www.aboriginal business.on.ca/resource_kit/ch8/ch8_7.html