



WHISTLER

REPORT | INFORMATION REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: December 15, 2020

REPORT: 20-123

FROM: Resort Experience

FILE: CPD20-1

SUBJECT: WHISTLER 101 SESSIONS PRE-LAUNCH UPDATE

COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Resort Experience be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive Information Report No. 20-123 regarding Whistler 101 Sessions (“**W101**”).

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to provide Council with an overview of the W101 project prior to the launch of W101 on December 16, 2020. This Report builds on Information Report 18-097 of July 24, 2018 and Information Report 19-137 of November 5, 2019.

DISCUSSION

Background

The beginning of what has become W101 traces back to Whistler’s Cultural Tourism Development Strategy (“**CTDS**”) of March 2011, and the final product – a mini-series of five high-quality videos that explore and celebrate Whistler’s *Geodiversity, Biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples History and Heritage, post-contact History and Heritage, and The Arts* – was inspired and guided by Whistler’s recently adopted Official Community Plan (“**OCP**”).

In 2011 the CTDS included the recommendation to ‘*Design and deliver training lectures in cultural tourism targeted at Whistler’s front-line tourism workers*’.

That recommendation recognized that most Whistler residents frequently interact with visitors either as customers – e.g. in the accommodation sector, food and beverage sector, retail sector, activities sector – or informally such as being asked for directions.

The importance of ‘community as front-line staff’ is amplified by the steady (pre-pandemic) global increase in cultural tourism; i.e. travelers seeking to experience a destination in its entirety: its landscape, natural environment, history, heritage, arts, and lifestyle.

Ideally, the entire community guides those travelers on that deeper journey. Therefore, it’s imperative that residents are knowledgeable about what makes a destination distinctive.

During initial planning for W101, the implementation of the CTDS recommendation (i.e. training lectures in cultural tourism for front-line workers) evolved from focussing primarily on tourism growth, to focussing equally on the community, and was guided by OCP narrative including:

Chapter 8: Sense of Community sub-chapter – Our Shared Future:

Residents feel a strong sense of community and close connections to the place and people of Whistler.

The passion of our community for the mountains, natural environment and recreational opportunities is celebrated and shared with visitors.

Chapter 9 sub-chapter **Education and Learning** – Our Shared Future:

Lifelong learning – including education for skills development, for accreditation or for enjoyment – is an integral component of Whistler’s culture and an important contributor to the local economy.

Many of those courses – whether for accreditation, professional skills development, personal skills development or individual enrichment – reflect Whistler’s passion for and commitment to sports, outdoor education, the arts, nature, heritage and First Nations culture.

Chapter 9 sub-chapter **Arts, Nature and Heritage** – Our Shared Future:

Whistler’s artists, naturalists, curators and other cultural workers are engaged in a rich, enduring and mutually rewarding conversation with residents and visitors about Whistler’s culture.

In return, residents have a deep appreciation for Whistler’s Arts, Nature and Heritage sector and for the sector’s immense influence on community pride and in shaping Whistler’s ‘sense of place’ that is felt so passionately by residents and is so captivating to visitors.

Further, W101 is consistent with the Resort Municipality of Whistler’s (“**RMOW**”) corporate goal:
Community character and mountain culture are reflected in municipal initiatives.

Led by and supported by the community

Prior to proceeding with W101, municipal staff met with key stakeholders from late 2017 through August 2018 to determine their level of interest in W101, and to identify existing programs with which W101 might unintentionally compete. Those meetings included representatives from:

- Arts Whistler
- Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (“**AWARE**”)
- Audain Art Museum
- Hotel Association of Whistler
- Restaurant Association of Whistler
- Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre (“**SLCC**”)
- Tourism Whistler (“**TW**”)
- Whistler Blackcomb
- Whistler Chamber of Commerce
- Whistler Learning Centre (“**WLC**”)
- Whistler Museum and Archives Society (“**WMAS**”)
- Whistler Naturalists
- Whistler Public Library (“**WPL**”)

Subsequent to stakeholder affirmation of the W101 concept, a Steering Committee was established to develop W101 Goals and Strategies. The Steering Committee was composed of the RMOW’s Manager of Cultural Planning & Development plus a representative from each of AWARE, WLC, Whistler Naturalists, and WPL.

Research conducted by TW on behalf of the W101 Steering Committee indicated the ideal model to optimize attendance would be:

- A range of topics; maximum 60 minutes per session.
- Theatre setting with a live presenter supported by photos and video.
- Opportunity for Q&A.
- Eventually available on-line.

Further, the target audiences for W101 as determined by the Steering Committee are:

1. Sea-to-Sky (“**S2S**”) residents aged 15+
 - Each lecture is presented at the academic level of a university undergraduate course.
2. S2S front-line staff including permanent & seasonal staff
 - Roles that involve frequent interaction with visitors; e.g. front desks in the accommodation sector; F&B; retail; guest services staff for activity providers; Village Hosts; Info Centre staff.
3. S2S High Schools
4. S2S Business Owners and Managers
5. Visitors

During November 2019, draft versions of W101 topics were presented to focus groups, the outcome of which was a resounding affirmation of the W101 concept plus content-specific feedback for each topic.

Armed with very encouraging research results and having made refinements to each presentation, the plan was to begin promoting W101 in late March 2020 with the first live presentation scheduled to occur in Maury Young Arts Centre (“**MYAC**”) on April 13, 2020. On March 10, the content developers and presenters for all five topics – *Geodiversity*, *Biodiversity*, *Indigenous Peoples History and Heritage*, *post-contact History and Heritage*, and *The Arts* – met to confirm presentation dates.

And then COVID. By mid-summer – when it became evident that gatherings of any size would not be possible for several months – the decision was made to develop and present W101 programming entirely online.

That required significant script revisions to compress the content of a 45-60 minute live presentation into an affordable 20-minute video. Funds were redeployed from MYAC venue rental to video production which involved ten pre-production meetings, five shoots – which have been completed – and significant post-production which is well underway and will conclude in mid-to-late January.

Advertising in Pique News Magazine – print and digital – began on December 10.

- The call to action is www.whistler.ca/101
- The landing page provides an overview of W101 plus links to each of the five videos on the RMOW’s YouTube platform
- Advertising is scheduled to run through February.

Next Steps

1. December 16: Episode 1, *Geodiversity* will be available for viewing at 7:00 PM; followed by:
2. January 6: Episode 2, *Biodiversity*
3. January 13: Episode 3, *Indigenous Peoples History & Heritage*
4. January 20: Episode 4, *Post-contact History and Heritage*.
5. January 27: Episode 5, *The Arts*

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Official Community Plan

W101 is consistent with and directly aligned with the OCP as follows:

Community Vision

A place where our community thrives, nature is protected and guests are inspired.

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Chapter 8 *Health, Safety and Community Wellbeing*; specifically:

- 8.1. *Goal* Promote, encourage and support initiatives that strengthen the community's sense of place and sense of belonging.
 - 8.1.1. *Objective* Protect and enhance Whistler's character and sense of place.
 - 8.1.1.1. *Policy* Support initiatives that preserve and celebrate Whistler's character, sense of place and unique, authentic mountain culture.

Chapter 9 *Learning, Culture and Recreation*; specifically:

- *Goal* 9.1: Ensure that an array of learning opportunities is available for residents and visitors.
 - *Objective* 9.1.4: Support and promote learning opportunities that reflect Whistler's unique character and culture.
 - *Policy* 9.1.4.1 Work with Whistler's diverse range of educators, skilled professionals, service providers and cultural institutions to provide learning experiences for all ages that reflect Whistler's culture and natural environment.
 - *Objective* 9.1.5: Collaborate with the Lil'wat Nation and Squamish Nation to provide opportunities to learn about both Nations.

Other Relevant Policies

The W101 Steering Committee developed project-specific goals including:

1. Enable and empower the community – individually and collectively – to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of Whistler including the biosphere, geology, history, heritage, and arts that surround us.
2. Strengthen the sense of belonging thereby assisting with resident retention by:
 - Identifying and celebrating Whistler's unique places – natural and constructed, ancient and new – as well as traditions, lifestyle & characters.
 - Providing shared, welcoming opportunities for life-long learning.
3. Providing a forum for learning, discussion, engagement, and connection.
4. Inspire stewardship of nature and deepen inter-organizational relationships through the premise that: *Through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.*

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

As indicated in the RMOW's Five year Financial Plans for 2019-23 and 2020-24 the development, production, and promotion of W101 during 2019 and 2020 was funded by the Province of British Columbia (including Municipal Regional District Tax, the Resort Municipality Initiative, plus grants from the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations, and Rural Development – Rural Dividend Program), and from the Canadian Geological Foundation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

As indicated in the Background section of this Report, extensive stakeholder engagement and consultation occurred during 2017-18 followed by establishing a W101 Steering Committee composed of representatives from AWARE, Whistler Naturalists, WLC, and WPL.

SUMMARY

W101 is a series of five videos that explore and celebrate Whistler's *Geodiversity, Biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples History and Heritage, post-contact History and Heritage, and the Arts*.

W101 will strengthen the sense of belonging and shared understanding among residents, will inspire stewardship of nature, and will deepen inter-organizational relationships through the premise that: *Through shared understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection.*

W101 will enable and empower the community – individually and collectively – to provide visitors with a deeper understanding of Whistler.

W101 Episode 1 – *Geodiversity* – will be launched on December 16, 2020 followed, weekly and sequentially throughout January by *Biodiversity, Indigenous Peoples History and Heritage, post-contact History and Heritage, and The Arts*.

After January 27, 2020 all five W101 Episodes will be permanently available for viewing for free on www.whistler.ca/101.

Respectfully submitted,

John Rae
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for
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GENERAL MANAGER OF RESORT EXPERIENCE