



**Guide to Applying to the  
Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Authenticity  
Program**

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# Guide to Applying to the Aboriginal Cultural Tourism Authenticity Program

## WHY AN ABORIGINAL AUTHENTICITY PROGRAM?

In many cases, the visitor wants an Indigenous cultural experience to involve face-to-face interact with an Aboriginal person, provide a connection to Aboriginal history and traditions, share traditional knowledge, and demonstrate that those Aboriginal people sharing the information are qualified to do so. What this says is that the tourist wants assurance that what they are experiencing is in fact an authentic, a true, a real, and a respectful Aboriginal cultural tourism experience.

For the Aboriginal community, ownership and control of the tourism business is mandatory. This ensures the economic benefits of sharing their culture is returned to the original people to promote the continuance of that culture, and for the people and nation, and most important, to ensure the integrity and truthfulness of the cultural content.

This is a **voluntary** program designed to achieve these goals.

- 1) It inspires **quality in the cultural tourism offering**.
- 2) It **certifies** to the visitor through a Brand that the business provides a true authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism experience.
- 3) It **raises the bar** for operators by promoting cultural integrity, market and/or export ready standards, and tourism product quality.
- 4) It promotes the **authorization** from designated Aboriginal community authorities for the respectful and appropriate sharing of Aboriginal culture.
- 5) It promotes the **practice of protocol** within First Nation traditional territories.
- 6) Most important, it provides a **unique and powerful marketing advantage** to those companies that choose to meet the stringent criteria for the cultural authenticity.

## BENEFITS TO PARTICIPATING

The Authenticity program is the top level marketing program of Aboriginal tourism businesses in British Columbia. Aboriginal tourism businesses that apply and gain approval to be recognized as an Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism business are considered to be the leaders in BC, and amongst the elite in Canada and internationally. The criteria and approval process sets high level standards to defining authenticity building upon industry and AtBC recognized criteria to be market ready, and First Nations and Métis communities' requisites to cultural integrity, trust, and respect.

Approved applicants gain the following marketing program benefits:

- ❑ **Authenticity Brand** – Association with the Authenticity program brand through AtBC marketing activities, and licensed use of the Brand (in accordance with the mark usage guidelines).
- ❑ **Aboriginal Tourism Publication (print)** – Featured product in:
  - **Consumer brochure** which includes photo, description, logo, contact information
  - **Tour Operator Tariff guide** – operations description and pricing

- ❑ **Aboriginal Tourism Consumer website** – Feature with web link on AtBC consumer website as an Authentic product
- ❑ **Other print materials** – Authenticity program specific
- ❑ **Map** – Identification on the AtBC tourism operator map
- ❑ **Tradeshows** – Presence through AtBC's attendance at travel trade marketplaces – Rendezvous Canada, Canada's West Marketplace
- ❑ **Tourism organizations** – AtBC promotion to RTOs, BC Visitor information centres, Tourism BC's HelloBC programs, and the Canada Tourism Commission programs, and other travel trade
- ❑ **Advertising** – Consumer advertising of Authenticity program (print and electronic)
- ❑ **Fam Tours** – Promotion to provincial, national and international fam tours (trade and media)
- ❑ **Media Relations** – promoted through AtBC media relations activities – press releases, media visits, and representation at media marketplaces (as applicable)
- ❑ **Quarterly E- Newsletter** – sent to consumer and travel trade market

For AtBC Aboriginal tourism business stakeholders -members that do not qualify for the Authenticity program, there are other marketing services and programs available. Please contact AtBC to find out what these are.

### PROGRAM CRITERIA

The certification application consists of six sections, the first five are mandatory to fulfill the authenticity program criteria. The following provides an overview of each of section. Only businesses that are deemed Aboriginal and operating in the tourism industry, and are Marketing Stakeholders in good-standing with AtBC, are eligible to apply to this program.

#### Section 1: Aboriginal Ownership and Control

Majority Aboriginal ownership (a Society must have majority Aboriginal membership and the Board of Directors must have majority Aboriginal people as directors) of at least 51% of the applying tourism business, and control (as demonstrated through majority Aboriginal people as directors) is a mandatory requirement of the program.

Aboriginal heritage must be proven through appropriate documentation. Further, Aboriginal ownership and control must be maintained at all times, and should this change to less than the minimum requirement (i.e., ownership or membership share change), the business will no longer qualify to be a recognized Authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism business, and participation will be in the program will be revoked.

#### Section 2: Tourism Business

A company that generates at least 60% of its business from tourists is considered a tourism business. For example, a gas station located alongside a highway where 60% of its customers are tourists (these can be tourists / travelers from other parts of BC), has a core operation of selling gas, but may still consider itself to be a tourism business. A gas station operating in a town centre where most of its customers are locals would not be a tourism business.

This program is only for tourism businesses that have a home location, and operate in select sectors of the tourism industry. You are asked to identify the tourism sectors your business operates in, and the primary sector.

#### Section 3: Market or Export Ready

Visitors and the travel trade expect a base set of operating standards from tourism operators. The standards tells the visitor the business operates at a minimum with other tourism businesses and for the travel trade / tour operators, it reassures them that your business is committed to long-term sustainability and delivers a quality experience. The criterion are outlined by the tourism industry and regulated by Tourism BC. AtBC also has market-ready standards that build upon industry requirements and incorporate Aboriginal community conditions.

### Section 4: Quality and Safety

Success in the tourism industry starts with satisfying the visitors' needs for quality and safety. Quality is measured by participating in tourism sector standards criteria and monitoring programs, and hospitality training, while safety is acknowledged through permits, insurance, and government safety programs. A tourism sector program like Canada Select, which rates accommodation facilities, is a voluntary program, but also provides evidence to AtBC that the sector standards are fulfilled.

### Section 5: Culture and Authenticity

There are two important considerations in this program on Aboriginal culture – Cultural Content, Cultural Activity Operating in its Traditional Territory – and whether there has been protocol completed to ensure the appropriateness of each.

- 1) **Cultural Content** considers whether the cultural activities being shared with visitors are approved by the “*Keepers of that Culture.*” Where a Nation does not have a system in place to grant cultural approval, applicants can still receive Authenticity designation by having the original Nation complete a declaration (included in this application package) granting that approval.
- 2) Is the **Cultural Activity Operating in its Traditional Territory** of where the culture originates? If it does not originate from or is not related to the Traditional Territory where it is being offered, whether appropriate protocols have been followed to receive approval from the host First Nation(s) to offer the activity in that First Nations traditional territory. This is a mandatory requirement of the application and must be accompanied by documentation proving protocol has been respected and adhered to.

There must be a minimum level of cultural elements to be defined as a cultural experience. The list in the Culture and Authenticity section lists a wide range of elements that engage the senses and heightens the visitor's experience and enjoyment.

The types of cultural elements offered also define whether the cultural elements are core, being the foundation to the business and the primary reason the tourism business exists, OR accessorizes the primary tourism activities that enhances the experience.

### Section 6: Applicant Declaration

Applicants must provide names of three references that agree to be contacted by AtBC to verify the applicant information. The applicant also signs and dates the application certifying that the information provided is truthful and gives AtBC permission to verify the information.

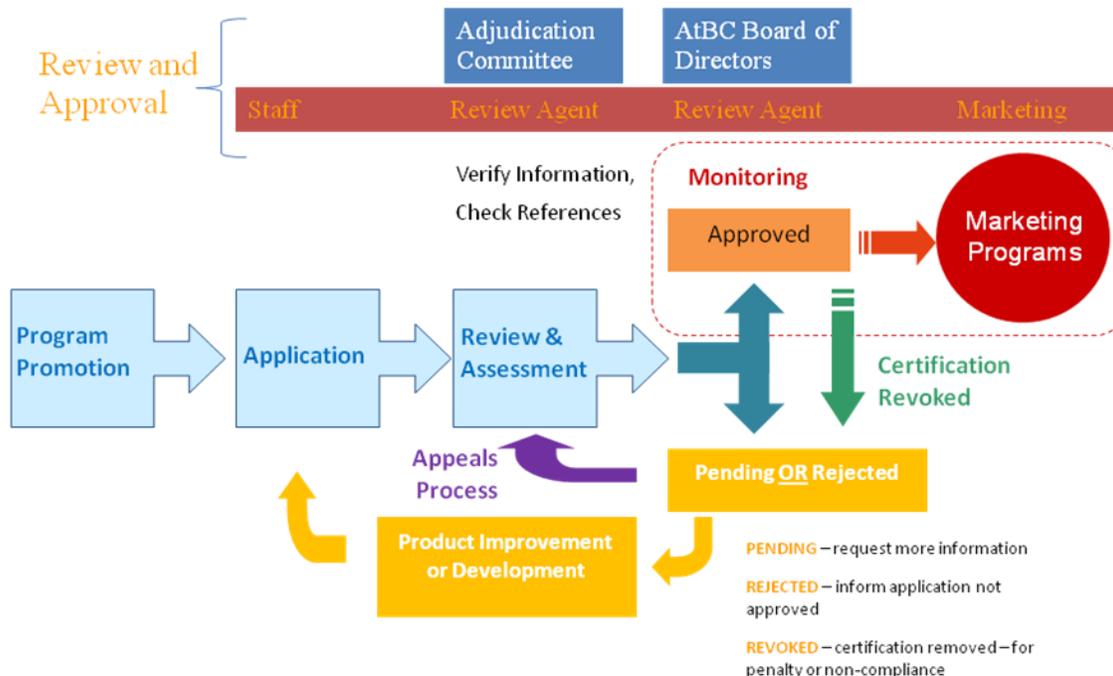
## THE APPLICATION FEES AND PROCESS

### Program Application Fees

All applicants must be in a current AtBC Marketing program and in good-standing with AtBC (i.e., no payments outstanding); there are no additional costs to apply. If you are not approved, there is no fee or partial fee to be returned.

### Application Process

The illustration below shows how the Authenticity program will be managed and how applications will be processed.



### Application Deadlines

Submissions deadlines are timed to coincide with the AtBC marketing program which typically operates from March to the end of October of each year. There program schedule and deadlines are:

- July 1 Program opens for applications
- Aug 15 Deadline – Letter of Intent to Apply
- Aug 3 Deadline Full application submission
- Nov 1 Adjudication Committee – recommendations meeting
- Nov 25 Adjudication Committee – recommendations meeting
- Dec 6-13 Letters / Emails to Applicants – emails sent to applicants notifying them of the status of their application. Approved applicants will receive a contract, program logo, and the Authenticity Program Brand Standards Usage Guide.

There are also three review and approval sessions to allow for applicants whose information is incomplete or cannot be verified in time for time for the first two review / approval sessions, and to allow time for appeals.

### Application Periods

The Authenticity program review process is annual, with the first and fourth years requiring full application completion, while the years between requiring completion only of a short renewal form.

- **First Year** – full application must be completed
- **Second and Third Years** – complete the renewal form
- **Fourth Year** – full application must be completed

### The Authenticity Program Brand and its Use

The Authenticity program and approved Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism businesses will be promoted through a Brand owned and controlled by AtBC, and the associated marketing programs. Brand use will be limited as outlined in a “License Agreement” AtBC will issue to the approved Aboriginal Cultural Tourism business. The license is a legally binding document that can be revoked by AtBC. Applicants accepted by the AtBC Board of Directors to be an approved Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism business are approved conditional to agreeing to the **Terms and Conditions** of the Authenticity program agreement.

### HOW TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION

Ensure that you respond to all questions. If the question is not applicable, indicate that you have read the question by: applying a mark, by indicating “N/A”, by drawing a line through the question, or by indicating the reason why the questions is N/A (not applicable).

Throughout the application, there are many areas that require proof / copies of documents – include these with your application to ensure you do not miss review deadlines.

Your References must be familiar with your business. Be certain to have them review your application and they must also sign the declaration.

Keep a full copy of your application and supporting documents so you will be able to respond to queries from the Review Agent.

Be certain to submit your application by the application deadlines. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### Checklist / Copies of Documents

As you complete the application form, you will be asked to include copies of various documents with your application. These include:

#### **Section 1: Aboriginal Ownership and Control**

- Business Ownership documents – copy of incorporation or society certificate
- Band or Tribal Council – letter or document by INAC, Band Council Resolution
- List of current board members and their status
- For each individual owner – proof of Aboriginal ancestry (i.e., Indian Status, Métis card, UNN card; Inuit Beneficiary card, Band Council Resolution)

#### **Section 4: Quality - Industry Sector Recognition**

Any relevant:

- Industry standards certificates
- Awards
- Licenses
- Permits
- Memberships

#### **Section 5: Culture and Authenticity**

- Supporting documentation demonstrating the First Nation(s) have granted or recognized your cultural content as being appropriate – letter from authorities, or “Declaration of Recognition of Aboriginal Tourism Business” form (included in application)
- Declaration granting approval to operate in traditional territory (if operating in another First Nations’ territory) – see “Declaration to Operate in Non-Traditional Territory” form included in application

#### **Section 6: Applicant Declaration**

- Question 6.1 References – confirmed by signature or email
- Question 6.2 declaration signed and witnessed

#### **Other**

- Promotional materials – brochures, flyers, post-cards, posters, catalogues, advertising, etc. – Ideally, some of these materials will illustrate cultural activities.

- ❑ Letters of recommendation, certification, reference

### RULES, POLICIES AND PENALTIES

Maintaining the credibility and reputation of the Authenticity program is essential to the overall success of the operators that have earned the designation, to the program, to the Aboriginal tourism industry, and to the Aboriginal communities. Asserting the program criteria and standards will be done by verifying the applicant qualifications, monitoring approved products, and applying Rules, Policies and Penalties throughout all aspects of the program. Below are the program regulations.

1. **Conflict of Interest** – A Conflict of Interest occurs when a member of the review and approval process, or the applicant references, are closely related to the Applicant. A close relation is an immediate family member, a owner or member of the applicant business, a member of the applicant board of directors, a beneficiary of the business, or a direct competitor of the applicant business (operating in the same tourism sector – i.e., hotel versus a resort, both are accommodations). If a reference is identified that would be in a conflict of interest, then the applicant will be requested to identify another reference. When there is a potential conflict of interest by any person involved in the review and approval process, the person will declare the conflict and remove him / her from the process.
2. **Lobbying** – The Applicant or a relation to the Applicant (see Conflict of Interest policy for definition of “relation to the applicant) is not permitted to lobby any person involved in Applicant review or approval process. Persons involved include the Review Agent, AtBC Staff, the Adjudication / Appeals Committee, and the AtBC Board of Directors. Should lobbying occur, the Applicant’s submission will be not be reviewed (it will be rejected) and the Applicant will not be permitted to reapply for two program years (which includes the current program year).
3. **Brand** – The AtBC Authenticity Brand will only be applied to approved authentic Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses. A business that is not approved is not permitted to use or be associated with the Brand, and any use of the Brand will be punishable in accordance with Canada and International intellectual property rights laws, and other applicable laws. An authorized Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism business must also agree to and comply with the rules of use of the Brand. Non-compliance will to be punishable by Law, and will result in the tourism business having its certification revoked.
4. **Appeals** – An Appeals process is available to Applicants that are resubmitting information contained in or missing from their application, or want to present a case for reconsideration of information pertaining to Quality, Safety, Market Readiness, or Culture. An Applicant is defined as a qualifying Aboriginal Tourism business, meaning the applicant must meet these two criteria. Appeals will not be heard from businesses that do not qualify as Aboriginal (owned and/or controlled), and are not operating in any of the identified tourism sectors, and are not full members of AtBC.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1. What is the AtBC authenticity program?

*It is a program that is designed to give those that qualify, a certification of authenticity that will provide a marketing advantage over those tourism businesses that do not offer authentic (both modern and traditional) Aboriginal cultural experiences and activities as a part of their tour package or business offering.*

#### 2. Why is authenticity important to AtBC?

*Visitors have indicated to Tourism BC/BC Ministry of Tourism and AtBC that they want to visit Authentic Aboriginal businesses with Aboriginal people they can meet and speak with. AtBC wants to help its members meet visitor demands and to be more profitable.*

#### 3. Do I have to apply to the authenticity program?

*The program is voluntary; however to qualify to apply to the Authenticity program, you must be an AtBC stakeholder in good standing, AND participate in an AtBC Marketing Program (see [www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/corp\\_marketing](http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/corp_marketing)), and you must qualify as an Aboriginal tourism business fully owned / controlled by Aboriginal people. The Marketing Program (which*

is largely supported by AtBC) provides thousands of dollars of national and international exposure at a small fraction of the cost to you.

**4. Do I need to fill in every question to qualify for the authenticity program?**

The application form contains questions that may not apply to your business, you cannot leave these responses blank. You must acknowledge that you have reviewed the question by applying a mark such as indicating “N/A” or by drawing a line through the question, or by indicating the reason why the questions is N/A (not applicable). If there are questions you have missed, you will be contacted by an AtBC representative to assist you with completing these questions. You may also contact AtBC with your questions.

**5. What is a Review Agent?**

A Review Agent is a person hired by AtBC to review all authenticity program applications, verify the information provided and follow up with applicants who have submitted incomplete applications.

**6. What are Mandatory Criteria?**

Mandatory Criteria are parts of the authenticity application that must to be met by the applicant in order to qualify for the authenticity program. For example, one mandatory criterion is that only businesses that deemed to be Aboriginal businesses in accordance with the AtBC definition, qualify for the program. Other mandatory criteria are identified in the application. If you are not certain you have met the criteria, contact AtBC with your questions and / or submit your application by the required deadline. The Review Agent will go over your application and notify you of any missing or insufficient responses.

**7. How do I know if my business is considered a tourism business?**

If you derive a minimum of 60% of your revenue from tourists, your business is considered a tourism business.

**8. Does AtBC have Market-ready Criteria?**

AtBC has established market and export ready guidelines that must be met as part of the mandatory criteria for authenticity certification. They can be found at [www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/corp\\_marketing](http://www.aboriginalbc.com/corporate/corp_marketing) on the Co-op Marketing program application form.

**9. What is the review and approval process for the authenticity program?**

The review process is: 1) application is received by AtBC with full payment by mail or courier; 2) Review Agent reviews the application, asks for additional information or determines that the application does not meet the Mandatory Criteria; 3) The Review Agent makes a recommendation to the Adjudication Committee to accept or reject an application; 4) The Adjudication Committee recommendations are submitted to the AtBC Board of Directors for acceptance; 5) Once the decision is made on the status of your application, AtBC will contact you. If the approval is granted, then a License Agreement will be issued; if it is rejected, the Applicant may choose to submit an appeal in writing.

**10. What is an Adjudication Committee?**

The Adjudication Committee is a group of Aboriginal and industry representatives from tourism who are responsible for appraising the Review Agent’s assessment, and recommending to AtBC if the applicant is recommended for approval or rejection to the “Authentic Aboriginal Cultural Tourism” program.

**11. How long does it take to get approved?**

Applications are available on the AtBC website year round. The Adjudication committee first meets in early November, and presents their recommendations to an AtBC Board of Directors meeting. Appeals or modifications to applications will be accepted up to 1 week prior to the second/last Adjudication meeting for that period.

**12. How often are new applications to the Authenticity program accepted?**

New applications are only accepted from July 1 to September 1 each year. The Notice of Intent to Apply must be filed by August 15, with the full application submitted by September 1.

**13. Do I have to complete a full application form each year?**

No, after your full application has been approved, the following two years only require you complete a program renewal form. This form will be sent to you by AtBC or you may obtain the form at [www.aboriginalbc.com](http://www.aboriginalbc.com). Your application completion cycle is:

- First Year – full application must be completed
- Second and Third Year – complete the renewal form
- Fourth Year – full application must be completed

**14. When do I submit my renewal form?**

The renewal form must be sent prior to annual deadline.

**15. When must I pay the application or renewal fee?**

If there is an application fee, you must pay the full amount of the required fee at the time of submission to have your application or renewal processed; otherwise you must have all other outstanding amounts due to AtBC (to be in good standing).

**16. What if my business is located in or operates on lands that are overlapping First Nations Traditional Territories?**

The applicant is required to get approval from the First Nation authorities of lands your Aboriginal tourism business is operating in. The direction of who grants the authority to operate in traditional lands is determined by the First Nations' whose lands you are in.

- If there is no requirement that you gain authority from all the “overlapping” First Nations, then one must grant permission to operate.
- One First Nation requires, others do not – get permission from the one that does.
- More than one requires permission – must gain permission from those that do. If all that require permission do not grant approval, then to avoid having your application rejected indicate reasons or rationale as to why it could not be obtained so the Review Agent can assess the situation.

**17. If there is no formal cultural approval system by the Aboriginal community, what do I do?**

If there is no approval system, have the **Declaration for Cultural Approval** contained in this application completed by the Authorities of the culture, and include the completed Declaration with your application.

**18. Who can be a Reference?**

A reference should be a person that is intimately familiar with your business operations. It can be a customer or supplier to your business, or a person involved in the tourism industry including a tourism operator in your region. It cannot be a person who is directly related to the Applicant (i.e., relative or staff), who is an owner or member of the association that owns the business, or a person who is on the Board of Directors, or an AtBC staff member or Director, or a person involved in the Application Review and Approval Process. Each reference must sign the form or submit an email that includes the required statement (see the application for the required reference statement).

**19. What if my application is not approved, can I appeal the decision?**

You may appeal on the grounds of missing information, or if you have new information or qualifications. Your request can only be submitted in writing to the Review Agent who will guide you through the Appeals process – a telephone request is not considered a **Request for Appeal**. The Appeal is only reviewed by the Adjudication Committee (not the AtBC Board of Directors); therefore, we recommend you submit your written appeal immediately upon being notified of your rejected application. Written appeals will only be accepted up to one week prior to the next Adjudication meeting.

**20. Can an approved Aboriginal Tourism Business have its designation revoked?**

*If an approved Aboriginal tourism business does not comply with the use of the Brand, or does not maintain the mandatory elements of the program criteria (which includes quality service and safety), then AtBC can revoke the approved businesses' authenticity designation, remove the business from all program elements, and thus request the use of the Brand be halted immediately. If approval is revoked, there is no reimbursement of any application fees.*

**21. Who owns the AtBC Authenticity Brand?**

*The Brand is the property of the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC (AtBC). As the Brand is an organization asset, AtBC is required to maintain the Brand's integrity and that is done by monitoring its use, and as required, taking legal action to protect its use and reputation. AtBC may choose to license the use of the Brand to others for a period of time or limited use / application, etc.; however, full ownership of the Brand still remains with AtBC. Approved operators are only permitted to utilize the mark once the License Agreement has been signed and only in accordance with the Authenticity Brand Usage Guidelines.*

**22. Can I use the Brand logo on my literature and website?**

*ONLY operators who have been approved and signed a license agreement are permitted to use the Authenticity mark / brand, and ONLY in accordance with the Brand Usage Guidelines. Any breach of the terms can result in the license being revoked and other disciplinary actions taken.*

## GLOSSARY

**Aboriginal** – meaning any person being of First Nation, Inuit or Métis ancestry in Canada, regardless of entitlement to be registered in the Canadian Government Indian Registry. Indigenous people are often described or distinguished by their way of life – such as living in separated communities or cultural or ethnic groupings. As many Indigenous people are migrating to urban settings, they still remain distinct from mainstream societies reflecting acculturation, for example modification of groups' and individuals' culture, behavior, beliefs, and values by borrowing from or adapting to other cultures and integration. Characteristics often identified with indigenous peoples used are:

*– self-identification and identification by others as being part of a distinct indigenous cultural group, and the display of a desire to preserve that cultural identity;*

*– a linguistic identity different from that of the dominant society;*

*– social, cultural, economic, and political traditions and institutions distinct from the dominant culture;*

*– economic systems oriented more toward traditional systems of production than mainstream systems;*

*– unique ties and attachments to traditional habitats and ancestral territories and natural resources in these habitats and territories.*

**ATS Travelers** – Aboriginal Tourism Site – point where the visitor completed the 2005 Blueprint survey

**Axiom violation** – anything saying it is true without proving it is; when it is real should be left to the tourists to decide that it is “real” or “authentic”.

**authentic** – not a reproduction, copied or complying to fact, being worthy of trust, reliance, or belief; having a claimed and verifiable origin or authorship, not counterfeit or copied.

**certification** – the act of verifying or validating the authenticity or originality of something or someone.

**contemporary** – is a misleading term, in its purest form it does not mean modern or present day.

**creative, originative** – having the ability or power to create, having a creative imagination.

**culture** – an integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for symbolic thought and social learning; the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution, organization or group.

**designation** – (noun) a distinguishing mark or name, distinctive title; (verb) act or process of identifying something.

**fake** – not true to what something presents itself as; not true, untrue statements.

**first** – preceding all others in time or space or degree.

**imitation** – (noun) something derived or copied from an original; in music, a repetition of phrase or melody; (adj) made to look like something else, usually a superior or popular product.

**interpretation** – a rendering or expression of work of literature, painting, music, or other art form; an extraction or rendition.

**origin** – the point when something begins existence or of which it derives; when referring to people, parentage or ancestry.

Synonyms include **inception, source, root**

**inception** – beginning of action or process

**source** – is the point of which something comes into being or is derived or obtained

**root** – the foundation of cause or basic reason for something.

**original** – (noun) an original creation (i.e., an audio recording) from which copies can be made (i.e., master copy, master); not derived or copied or translated from something else, like “the design is original, not an adaption from historical designs”; something that serves as a model or a basis for making copies such as the basis for creating a reproduction, copy or limited edition. (adj) Preceding all others in time or being as first made or performed, like “the original inhabitants of XXX”; not second hand or by way of a copy or reproduction method; a product of something fresh, unusual or unique, being of original mind.

**primary** – of first rank or importance or value; direct and immediate rather than secondary; being the “primary goals”, or “primary sources.”

**traditional design** – pertaining to time-honored practices, history and morality learned through a knowledge transfer system; tradition from the Latin word *traditio* meaning to hand down or hand over; based on beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next, set of customs or practices; that brought from the past to present in a society system. Traditions may also be changed to suit the needs of the day which may be accepted as part of ancient tradition. Designs may be traditional designs (ancient tradition) or modern designs (modern tradition).

**unconventional** – not conforming to accepted rules or standards, such as “his unconventional method to mask making.”

**undervived** – not derived; the first of all others, preceding all others in time, primary or simple; not originating from something else; result of new things or ideas, being inventive; being the source of a copy, reproduction or translation; an authentic work of art; comprised first hand.

**unoriginal** – not original; not being creative or produced as fresh or different; duplication.

**VIC Travelers** – Visitor Information Centre travelers – point where the visitor completed the 2005 Blueprint survey.



## Questions

Aboriginal Tourism Association of British Columbia  
600-100 Park Royal South  
West Vancouver, BC V7T 1A2  
Canada  
Tel. 604-921-1070  
Toll-Free 1-877-266-2822  
[www.AboriginalBC.com](http://www.AboriginalBC.com)

Revised: July 2012