

Innovation Snapshot

British Columbia has thousands of innovative entrepreneurs and leaders in tourism. These people are one of the best sources of information on what works and does not work in the industry.

Innovator in:
Signage

Key Words: Visitor
Experience, Signage,
Marketing

Contact: Vic Bates
(250) 836-2838
www.crazycreekwaterfalls.com



Crazy Creek Waterfall and Suspension Bridge

By Rachel Huber

Background

Located in Central, BC between the towns of Sicamous and Revelstoke, along Highway 1, is the natural attraction of Crazy Creek Waterfall and Suspension Bridge. Crazy Creek offers visitors the experiences of viewing a waterfall up-close and walking over the waterfall via a suspension bridge and boardwalks. In 2000, Vic Bates purchased the 160 acre land which encompassed the waterfall, and in 2002, he decided that the waterfall is a national treasure that should be shared with everyone; therefore in 2004 he opened the business. In the future, Vic hopes to expand the business so that visitors can tour an old village settlement site and learn about the mining and logging history in the area.

The Issue

As more tourists are entering BC's road systems and visiting the province's attractions, improved signage programming is needed to guide tourists to the right destination. Signs act as the first impression for visitors and they have the power to attract or discourage tourists from stopping at your attraction. As well, signs can act as stand-in information advisors when staff is unavailable to interpret travel information to tourists. Signage directly impacts visitor experience; therefore it is important to have adequate and consistent signs to ensure the success of the attraction. A major problem for the province is that many operators and communities fail to realize the importance of a complete and comprehensive signage program. This would include directions to the community, directional signs within a community, and other informative and interpretive signs.



This failure results in B.C. having one of the worst province-wide signage programs in Canada.

The Innovation

Crazy Creek has taken a very progressive approach to attracting and directing visitors to their business through a successful signage program. Before development of the attraction, Vic understood that one of the keys to satisfying his visitors was to provide adequate signage. As well, Vic decided that he would not put a lot of funding into material promotions (flyers, newspaper ads) and instead put most of his marketing fund towards a signage program which would “catch” visitors from the nearby highway. To assist in the development of the program he hired a consultant who developed a very elaborate signage program. This was part of Vic’s preliminary development plan for the entire attraction. During the initial start of his business, the program consisted of many signs including signage for the following: welcoming, directional, on-site informative focused on amenities at the attraction, interpretive descriptions of the attractions, and other various signs placed throughout the attraction. The program also consisted of a series of large and attractive signs along the highway to draw tourists in as they drove by the attraction. All of the signs that Vic posted have a very consistent theme, color scheme, and font to help ensure that the visitors are more satisfied with their experience and to ensure that his attraction is user friendly for all types of tourists. Vic stated that the “signage you put up has to agree with the quality of the product;” which is reflected in the success of his attraction.

The Impact

Crazy Creek has proven to be a great example of how successful a signage program can be for “catching” visitors and drawing them to the attraction. As well, they have proven how attractive and consistent signage improves the visitor’s experience resulting in return visitors. Crazy Creek’s success was proven within the first year of operation. In 2004, Crazy Creek opened and during the first year, over 30,000 people visited the attraction. During the second year 48,000 people visited and during the third year 45,000 people visited resulting in an average of 40,000 people annually.