

Statement on Tourism, Food Tourism and Climate Change

Prepared for the panel on Food Tourism for Sustainable Development

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Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Change

Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island)

We would like to acknowledge, recognize and thank the Indigenous Peoples upon who's territory we gather. Wela'lioq / Thank you / Merci

Thank you to the panel participants, and the instigator of all that is good, Trevor Jonas Benson, for allowing us a moment to share our thoughts on tourism, food tourism and climate change.

The School of Climate Change and Adaptation at the University of Prince Edward Island is offering the first, in the world, applied Bachelor of Science degree in climate change and adaptation. Our class is the inaugural offering of Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Change course.

The following is our statement on Tourism, Food Tourism and Climate Change.

The record-breaking economic growth in the global tourism industry, at an estimated four percent annual GDP growth rate, is quite remarkable. Tourism represents a special economic engine for rural, remote and Indigenous communities in Canada, and around the world. By all accounts, tourism outpaces every sector of the global economy and provides economic opportunities in places that contemporary economic development may not function, for example remote Indigenous communities in Canada.

Inside of this incredible industry growth, the demand for food-centred tourism is staggering. In the United States of America, for example, a 2012 estimate put food tourism expenditures at \$201 billion,

representing approximately 25 per cent of the overall tourism spend. This makes food tourism and food service the highest spend in the travel nexus.ⁱ

The economic growth in tourism and food tourism is also having an environmental impact that seems to be ignored, or understated. A ground-breaking study released in May 2018, *The Carbon footprint of Global Tourism*, found that between 2009 and 2013, the tourism industries global carbon emissions increased from 3.9 to 4.5 gigatons. This is four times more than what has been previously thought; we now understand that tourism activities account for between 8 and 10 per cent of total global greenhouse gas emissions.ⁱⁱ By 2025, the tourism carbon footprint is estimated to reach 6.5 gigatons.ⁱⁱⁱ

While the economic opportunities are there, our shared tourism industry would be amiss if we did not consider the impact of economic growth on the environment. In the process of building food tourism product, or marketing and driving demand for existing product, we must consider that the tourism industry as a whole (it may be more in the food tourism sector) has a 25 per cent larger carbon footprint than any other industry?^{iv}

The 2018 *Carbon Footprint* paper also highlighted that the tourism industry regards itself as a relatively low carbon impact development option. The effect of this thinking has been that unabated investments are made into the industry without proper consideration of climate change impacts. The tourism and food tourism industry are not alone in using a model for development that hinges on the idea of limitless growth. This model tends to ignore, deny or understate its impact on the environment. No industry can grow exponentially, especially if it has an intensive carbon footprint, such as tourism. Likewise, as the knowledge of tourism's carbon intensity builds, the regular use of sustainable tourism in marketing and industry forums will become increasingly awkward. The science is clear, tourism is "significantly more carbon intensive than any other potential form of economic development."^v

We, the Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Change class, have a query for this panel, the audience, IMPACT organizers and sponsors, and it is this: If tourism and food tourism are being called sustainable because by definition (of which there are many) it respects the environment, then exactly how does the most carbon intensive industry, with a growth rate that outstrips all other industries, purport to respect the environment, and be truly sustainable?

At 4.5 gigatons of carbon, estimated to grow to 6.5 gigatons by 2025 (an increase of 44 per cent), the tourism impact on the world is quite literally a big deal. There is also an immediacy in our shared work. The Chief's in Assembly during the Assembly of First Nations 2019 Annual Assembly stated that we are in a climate change crisis. Their voice is one of many calling for change.

The food tourism industry, in fact the entire food pathway collective, has some serious thinking to do. We believe that food, in the context of an accelerated warming world, presents a serious quandary for tourism professionals and operators: feeding people for sustenance will increasingly and directly compete with the need to feed people for leisure. In a 2018 report led by Princeton University, the authors state that meeting the basic food (as caloric intake) needs of every human, estimated to be 10 billion by 2050, will take extraordinary measures. What complicates the meeting of the basic food needs into the future is that current trajectories (read global tourism growth) will result in food, land and GHG mitigation gaps that push us well beyond 2 degrees warming.^{vi}

By all accounts this will result in catastrophic results for life on earth. Even without placing the potential catastrophic impacts due to climate change on the menu, the tourism and agricultural industries will have to reckon with how to provide food for travel versus everyday sustenance.

Tourism developments can and do present development options where all other options might fail. Unfortunately, these are the same populations that are the most vulnerable to effects of climate change. As representative tourism organizations drive demand for, and economic growth in tourism, they may be implicit in “creating a viscous cycle of tourism growth, emissions growth and increased vulnerability.”^{vii}

As we begin to better understand carbon in the food tourism industry, more and more industry supporters are looking for answers. The social development goals present an interesting opportunity to begin this change. However, even the path to achieving the SDG’s may not be immune from the impacts of climate change. The emergent consensus is that “[c]limate change will pose an increasing barrier to tourism contributions to the Sustain Development Goals.”^{viii}

Even if the science is not enough to motivate us, economists and the economics they practice should be. The Governor of the Bank of England (formerly of Canada) has warned that, “Companies and industries that are not moving towards zero-carbon emissions will be punished by investors and go bankrupt.”^{ix}

Charlie Greg Sark (Mi’kmaq) is from the Lennox Island First Nation (Epekwitk / PEI) and is an Assistant Professor in the School of Climate Change & Adaptation at the University of Prince Edward Island. His class, *Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Change* contributed to this statement. The SCCA will also be putting an increased emphasis on the study of tourism and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Please, contact Charlie if you have any questions, or comments. He can be reached at 902-628-4326 / cgsark@upei.ca.

Wela’liq / Thank you / Merci

ⁱ Shankman, S. (2015, February 23). *The Big Business of Food Tourism and Why It Matters*. Retrieved from: <https://skift.com/2015/02/23/the-big-business-of-food-tourism-and-why-it-matters/>

ⁱⁱ Lenzen, M., Sun, Y., Faturay, F. et al. (2018) *The carbon footprint of global tourism*. *Nature Climate Change*, 8, 522–528.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cross, D. T. (2019). *Global tourism leaves a giant carbon footprint*. Retrieved from: <https://www.sustainability-times.com/sustainable-business/global-tourisms-giant-carbon-footprint/>

^{iv} Sun, Y. & Malik, A. *The road more traveled: tourism’s alarming — and growing — carbon footprint*. Retrieved from: <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/road-more-traveled-tourisms-alarming-and-growing-carbon-footprint>

^v Gabbatiss, J. (2018, May 7). *Tourism is responsible for nearly one tenth of the world’s carbon emissions*. Retrieved from: <https://www.independent.co.uk/environment/tourism-climate-change-carbon-emissions-global-warming-flying-cars-transport-a8338946.html>

^{vi} Searchinger, T. et al. (2018). *Creating a Sustainable Food Future: Synthesis Report*. World Research Institute.

^{vii} Scotta, D., Hall M., & Gössling, S. (2019). *Global tourism vulnerability to climate change*. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 77, Page 59.

^{viii} *Ibid*, Page 49.

^{ix} Carrington, D. (2019 October 13). *Firms ignoring climate crisis will go bankrupt, says Mark Carney* Retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/oct/13/firms-ignoring-climate-crisis-bankrupt-mark-carney-bank-england-governor>