

**MOTIVATION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY OF
VOLUNTOURISM**

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Abstract

Volunteer tourism (voluntourism) has been described as an alternative form of tourism to mass tourism. It has been suggested that understanding the motivations of voluntourists might lead to a better understanding of the socio-cultural dimension of voluntourism sustainability. The aim of this thesis is to identify the key motives of voluntourists and how these motives affect the socio-cultural sustainability of a society. Virtual ethnography, observation, and semi-structured interviews were employed in order to collect the research data from Eden Valley – a Canadian First Nation reserve, Global Citizen Network (GCN) – a voluntourism organiser, and voluntourists who took part in previous volunteering trips. The study found that authenticity, cultural concerns, the search for unique experience, helping the '*other*', and self-healing are the key motives that drive travellers to participate in voluntourism projects. The data collected show that voluntourism has a greater positive socio-cultural impact on targeted communities than mass-tourism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction to the Field site

The Eden Valley Reserve is located near Longview, southwest of Calgary in Alberta, Canada (Eden Valley Indian Reserve No. 216). It is a small community of less than 100 families populated by the Stoney Nakoda, covering roughly 17.5 square kilometres of undulating bush set in the foothills (*Appendix 1*). The community is very poor, with high unemployment, low rates of secondary education, inadequate infrastructure and services, and severely depleted housing. The Stoney Nakoda Nation comprises individual members of the Bearspaw First Nation, the Chiniki First Nation, and the Wesley First Nation.

The community is set close to a national park, and in beautiful countryside, with close access to the Rocky Mountains. It has around 120 buildings, which include a daycare, school, gas station, community centre, church, training centre, and other administration buildings; however, there is no convenience store. Many of the dwellings are in poor condition. Access to the community is limited to a few gravel roads in very poor condition, and the infrastructure for the community is also limited. There are a number of wild horses in the area, and the Highwood River runs through the community.

Upon arriving at the site, there is juxtaposition in the first impressions of the reserve: the reserve is bordered with a beautifully inlaid town sign (*Figure 1*), brightly coloured and expressive. This unique marker is in stark contrast to the condition of the gravel road on the reserve's side of the gate, which is full of potholes, ditches, bumpy, muddy, and generally poorly maintained.

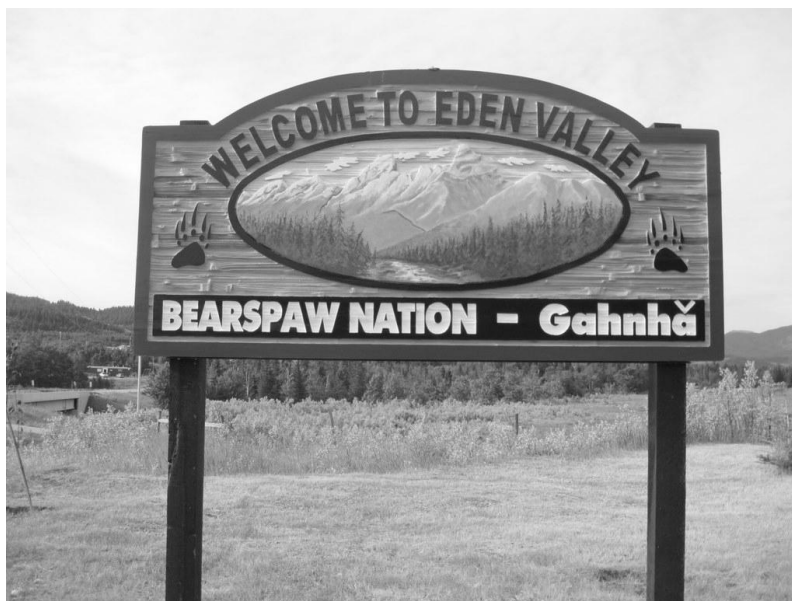


Figure 1: A sign by Eden Valley Main Gate.

Once through the gate, the visitor is presented with the first community building, a gas station which appears to have not been modernised for some significant time. The gas station lot is unpaved, and the general appearance of the station is very poor. Accompanying this image, south east of the gas station is the administration building - which seems in even poorer condition. The researcher has visited this building several times, and noticed that the stairs are very poor and built from very old and weak timber. The door is noticeable in that it was made from some sort of metal, and painted an ‘ugly’ burgundy colour; moreover, the door was unusually large for the size of the building.

Though the researcher, in his many visits to the Eden Valley Reserve noted a lack of people moving around the community, it appears the population is about six-hundred. A number of the community expressed an interest in contributing and remaining in the reserve. Statistics Canada (Government of Canada, 2007) reports that the total population in 2006 was three-hundred and seventy (*Appendix 1*).

There was a noticeable lack of proximity between the houses and the community buildings. Most of the dwellings were placed at the end of a driveway, and were positioned on their own and in no apparent order. Some were buried away in the bush at the top of hills, well out of sight of the centre of the reserve. Many of the dwellings appeared to be very roughly constructed, made from a simple frame and faced in compressed fibreboard. These external walls were not flashed, and often unpainted. It was unclear if there was any form of insulation. Some of the houses had followed a more ‘western’ construction paradigm, in that they were constructed more carefully with a better framework, and had some form of weather-resistant siding.

However, the dwellings of this construction had suffered from lack of maintenance, and some were in dire need of renovation. On the whole, the living standard in the reserve was reminiscent of ‘third world shanty towns’. Having seen Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, the researcher noted that there was a *better* living standard in those camps than in Eden Valley. Many of the signs and buildings were adorned with graffiti. The 2006 census found that seventy-one percent of the housing in Eden Valley was recorded as requiring major repairs, even though sixty-four percent of the housing was constructed between 1986-2006 (Government of Canada, 2007).

However, it must also be noted that some of the buildings appeared to be newly built, and of good quality. The relatively new school is a spectacular building. It is also unusually large considering the reserve’s size. Statistics Canada figures show, however, that seventy-eight percent of the population fifteen years old and over do not have a high school certificate (Government of Canada, 2007).

Another building, the Health Canada building, was paid for and donated to the community in 2010 by Health Canada. This building is of excellent standard, and is tastefully decorated and furnished inside, and the outside is well maintained. It has a grassed garden with three flagpoles, surrounded by a low chain-link fence. The quality and size of buildings of this nature stand in sharp contrast to some of the impoverished and unsanitary dwellings.

According to Statistics Canada (2007), the Eden Valley population decreased by 27.3% between 2001- 2006. Between 2006 and 2012 the population nearly doubled. Thus, judging from the current population, it seems that this downward trend has been reversed. This mindset can perhaps be seen in the creation and preservation of fine larger community buildings, which would seem too large for the current size of the community. If, however, the population were to increase again, the community buildings would be able to handle larger numbers.

One of the Global Citizen Network (GCN – the voluntourism-sending organisation which runs the project in the Eden Valley) contributions to the community has been the repair and maintenance of community buildings. The researcher witnessed several outcomes of this labour on the community church, and the social services building. Having witnessed the results of the voluntourism project at Eden Valley, the researcher was then interested in focusing his attention on what motivated an individual to travel in this way.

Research Issue

This thesis is a comprehensive investigation into the study of voluntourism at a First Nations reserve in Alberta, Canada. As part of this project, qualitative methods, including observation, interviews, and virtual ethnography, were used to investigate the motivations behind travelling in volunteer based tourism. Many elements of this travel form have been researched and investigated, and this thesis concentrates on several core concepts that will be elaborated upon later. It looks at some of the outcomes of volunteering trips to the Eden Valley, but focuses specifically on determining the motivations of both traveller and sending organisation, as well as any cultural effects that may result from the involvement of motivated travellers.

The Eden Valley project researched for this study is run by a ‘sending organisation’ called Global Citizens Network (GCN), which is a non-for-profit volunteer tourism organisation based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It is comprised of eleven directors, and around twenty other staff. In 2010 it had a gross income of \$327,963 (Universal-Giving, 2012), from which it made a \$700 profit. GCN specialises in cultural preservation work in Aboriginal communities around the world. Their mission statement reads: “In partnership with people of diverse cultures, GCN promotes cross-cultural understanding and interconnectedness through authentic immersion experiences.” Unlike some other organisations, GCN seeks to organise community-led voluntourism projects. This was the case with the projects they undertook for a length of three years at Eden Valley, although the projects were originally initiated and planned by the host community administration. GCN currently operates in twenty host communities throughout North

America, Latin America, Africa and Asia, and have a unique company policy that privileges the objective of a 'Global Community'.

As the Eden Valley project is different from the usual voluntourism destinations – in that it is occurring within a developed country – it was a natural choice for this study. Furthermore, its proximity to the researcher's university permitted an unfunded research program. Finally, as an anthropologist, the researcher was keen to investigate the Aboriginal people of his local area.

Specific Research Question and Thesis Synopsis

The fundamental purpose of this study was to explore the question:

What motivates volunteers to participate in volunteering trips into The Eden Valley Reserve? And the contribution of that to socio-cultural sustainability

The primary research interest of this study is to determine the reason for tourists travelling in this particular manner; to identify and investigate their *motivations*.

However, the thesis also compares and contrasts the cultural sustainability of voluntourism with the more common form of tourism: mass-tourism. It also considers the cultural effect of this form of travel on the host community.

By investigating a voluntourism project run in Canada, this thesis attempts to discover more information about the phenomena of voluntourism. Through qualitative methods, background research and analysis, this thesis considers some of the reasons for voluntourism and some of its effects in a specific context. Whether or not voluntourism emerges as a valid form of alternative tourism, and whether or not it leads to socio-cultural sustainability are fundamental questions behind this thesis. The analysis presented here includes a projection of the likely outcomes of further trips into that

region, highlighting areas of concern and presenting a number of conclusions and recommendations.

The key findings of this study demonstrate that the voluntourist's primary motivations for pursuing this type of tourism are an interest in other cultures, a search for authenticity, a search for a unique experience, and the cathartic nature of helping others.

Chapter Two: Background

Voluntourism: Definition and Description

Voluntourism emerges as a ‘politically correct’ form of tourism to attempt to address the perception of the negative impacts of the tourism industry. The voluntourism phenomenon is expanding rapidly, but some critics argue it is surreptitiously commercializing and commoditizing a culture (Carrigan, 2010; Coren & Gray, 2011; Gray & Campbell, 2007; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; McMillon, Cutchins, Geissinger, & Asner, 2012). This opens the door to challenging the validity of voluntourism as an alternative form to sustainable tourism, and that challenge is a focal point in this research.

According to McGehee and Santos, (2005, p. 760) volunteer tourism is “utilizing discretionary time and income to travel out of the sphere of regular activity to assist others in need.” Brown (2005, p. 480) defines voluntourism as “[the] type of tourism experience where a tour operator offers travellers an opportunity to participate in an optional excursion that has a volunteer component, as well as a cultural exchange with local people”. Voluntourism facilitators are usually non-profit organisations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

The phenomenon of voluntourism is recent, and has been rarely studied and investigated. There is no specific study exploring the motivations of voluntourism. However, Cohen et al. (2002) have addressed the motivation dimension of volunteers travelling in the Sinai desert. They concluded that adventure was, for those tourists, the major motive which attracted them to participate in these volunteering trips. There is also no specific study into the socio-cultural impact of voluntourism, although some work discusses the topic indirectly. McGehee and Andereck (2009) conducted a study of a

rural community in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States, and another community in Baja California, Mexico. In both communities, they examined the impact of voluntourists on selected social activities such as healthcare, education and water supply. Their results demonstrated a mixed support for social exchange theory. They also noted that the role of the sending organisations ought to privilege the local community's involvement as an integral part in the voluntourism process.

Potential studies might investigate other pulls of voluntourism such as the protection of nature, teaching and training, working with children, eliminating poverty, supplying clean drinking water to communities, preserving and promoting cultures, serving the disabled and elderly and many more activities which benefit host communities. Such research into these hitherto un-investigated areas might produce benefits to host communities.

Nevertheless, from what little existing research has been conducted, it seems that voluntourism may provide several benefits to cultural sustainability, such as financial support and expert knowledge and skills for community development schemes (C. Ellis, 2003). These voluntourism benefits offer the means for community members to produce and preserve wealth, promote mutual respect and understanding through dynamic cultural communication (S. Wearing & Neil, 1999), share responsibilities for a common purpose, and improve self-determination. They also help local communities exert more local control and encourage the constructive preservation of the local cultural heritage.

Voluntourism, however, also faces a number of challenges. Some authors (Alexander & Bakir, 2011; Birrell, 2010; S. Ellis, 2007) address that voluntourism may cause more damage than good, both for voluntourists and the communities they work

with. Temporary voluntourists are often unskilled and unqualified, and as a result, are not able to make an efficient contribution to the host community and may end up adding to the general confusion despite the sincerity of their intentions. Also, volunteering while travelling is a significant commitment, and the work might be easier to conceptualise than carry out. Volunteers may feel bored in many cases because of the routine or repetitive nature of the work. Accommodation and facilities for voluntourists are usually quite simple, and the voluntourists often find that they have little to no privacy; indeed, due to the nature of the location, the living conditions may not be clean and may not meet the participants' minimum standards – especially if the participant is from an elevated Western society and is used to a much different standard.

The researcher noted during the research for this thesis, that voluntourism presented a considerable financial concern for travellers. Many of the voluntourism trips were significantly more expensive than a mass tourism trip equivalent. As such, only individuals who can afford the cost and longer duration of the trips are able to select voluntourism as a travel option.

First of all, volunteers have to pay for their own trips, despite also volunteering their time. Not everyone who is involved in, or affected by, voluntourism benefits economically. The host community will, in many cases, also not benefit economically (Honey, 1999). Since the majority of the organisations (NGOs) sending the volunteers are from developed countries, and a significant portion of the cost of the trip is invested by the NGOs in their administration and operational costs, the cost of the vacation is almost entirely absorbed by the NGO, rather than the traveller's cost benefitting the host community.

Several of the interviews conducted with GCN staff mentioned the high operating costs of the organisation, though they also mentioned that many of the staff were volunteers themselves. An interview with one of GCN's members, George, indicated that ninety-five percent of GCN's project funding comes from program participants. These fees are used to pay for administrative costs, travel costs, and are also used to make a donation to achieve the goals of the voluntourism projects.

A further cost covered by the participation fees covers the cost of training team leaders. These leaders are, amongst other skills, trained in development theory and cultural sensitivity so as to limit the cultural intrusiveness of GCN projects.

Local community members rarely benefit in terms of employment – low-wage or other. Again, like other types of tourism, voluntourism may create further distinction, and even conflicts, between the rich and the poor, as local leaders control economic benefits. Many of the Eden Valley projects were atypical, such as: a traditional cooking demonstration, traditional dancing, and meat curing and smoking. Maintenance and cultural preservation are occasionally seen in other voluntourism projects, but the focus is usually on teaching, healthcare aid, disaster relief, flora and fauna conservation, assistance with rehabilitation of the impaired, and similar.

From a management perspective, the destination's carrying capacity should be considered - an overload of tourists may create pressure on a community's limited resources. Pressure may also be placed on the fragile local culture, especially in small communities. That is to say, an 'authentic' interaction between the voluntourists and locals can only be derived from the commercialising of local cultures and nature - turning

volunteer tourism into a mass tourism with a different face. Moreover, tourism or voluntourism may also create an excessive local dependence on foreign aid.

These issues suggest how voluntourism may detract from the environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions of tourism.

Socio-cultural Sustainability

Sustainability means, essentially, the adoption of a new ethic of living on the planet; producing a fairer, more reasonable, and just society, through the fair distribution of social goods and resources (Duxbury & Gillette, 2007).

However, another aspect of sustainability might be found in the reduced use and waste of resources such as water, land, oil, and gas. Thus sustainability usually includes three aspects: environmental, economic, and socio-cultural. Social sustainability defines the ability of a society to maintain and build on its own resources, and have the power to minimize and address problems in the future. Cultural sustainability includes attention to a complex of distinctive religious, rational and emotional features that differentiate a social group - it includes arts, modes of life, value systems, traditions, and belief (Blake, 2001). The socio-cultural dimension has traditionally been a combination of both, having both social and cultural components. However, various models of sustainability have incorporated the cultural dimension separately (Duxbury & Gillette, 2007).

This thesis focuses on the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability. According to Geertz, (1973) 'society' refers to a certain arrangement of social relationships in a certain group, while 'culture' refers to the shared beliefs and symbols of that group. Human culture is the result of a continuous dialectic between stakeholder voices and their everyday activities. These activities may be related to religious beliefs, economic

practices, or alternative tourism (C. M. Hall & Lew, 2009), but also depend upon a myriad of other factors. Cultural sustainability refers to developing and maintaining a way of life that creates enduring relationships with other peoples and the natural world. Socio-cultural sustainability is a concept that seeks to maintain the stability of social and cultural systems, including the reduction of destructive conflicts. The socio-cultural dimension is integral to sustainability.

Through the research for this thesis, it appears that quality, continuity, and balance are three bases for sustainable tourism. As portrayed in (*Figure 2*), voluntourism shapes the social and cultural sustainability in three ways:

- The equal access to basic needs by the people in any community such as healthy food, shelter, healthcare, safety and security.
- Individual capacity can be improved through: personal development, appreciating values (such as knowing own culture and learning about other cultures), and skill and career development (which refers to travelling to gain more experience and to practice certain skills).
- Community capacity includes identity, language, social group, networks, clubs, and government.

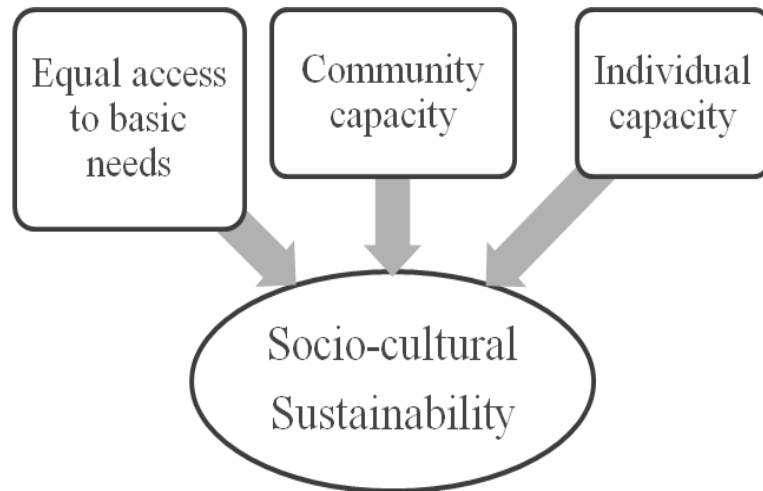


Figure 2: Contribution of Voluntourism to Socio-Cultural Sustainability.

In my focus on cultural sustainability, two key elements are relevant: cultural preservation and cultural promotion. Cultural preservation refers to certain activities that help those of a particular culture to keep and maintain their cultural values and beliefs, while cultural promotion refers to supporting and encouraging the local community's 'indigenous groups' in maintaining their attitudes and behaviours - which are representative of their cultural distinctiveness.

The eagerness of the government and tourism policy makers in promoting the tourism sector to a major industry, coupled with the enthusiasm of the local people to develop themselves, can give rise to negative socio-cultural impacts in certain areas, as a result of unexpected exposure to foreign tourism. In one case study, Cooper & Ozdil (1992) noted that family houses were turned into retirement funds; local women in tourist areas were threatened by the behaviour of foreign female tourists; agriculture and farming were abandoned in favour of tourist businesses; and the tourists who found local – Turkish in his case - products inexpensive were exploited. This is not to say that these

results are always a function of tourism, only that there may be a link between the promotion of the tourism sector, and negative impacts in the community.

While some studies focus on the socio-cultural impact, McGehee and Santos (2005) instead focus on the impact of voluntourism activities on program participants by studying the likelihood of these participants to engage in social movements following the end of their tour. The authors found that individuals were, in fact, more likely to pursue activism following the end of their tour - indicating the socio-cultural impact of voluntourism. This increased activism may have potential long-term effect on the socio-cultural sustainability of a host community. Should the activism engender a renewed focus on a community, this would undoubtedly include an increase in travellers which might jeopardise the cultural sustainability of that particular community. However, increased activism may also benefit a community by providing more Western attention, bridging cultures, alleviating disease, and community development.

The socio-cultural dimension is essential for sustainability. Due to the increase in the popularity of voluntourism, there are concerns that voluntourism might eventually become as detrimental to a community as mass tourism currently is. The following section further investigates the commodification of a culture through mass tourism and voluntourism.

Mass Tourism, Voluntourism and Commodification

Mass tourism, the group packaging style experience of tourism, started to develop after the industrial revolution - although, for the aristocratic classes of urbanized European countries, a primitive form of tourism already existed. Mass tourism was catalyzed by the development of transportation and technology, which provided people

with extra leisure time – particularly in England. The primary destinations for tourism in that period were the Mediterranean coastal areas in areas like Spain and Italy. Certainly, mass tourism was directed to destination sites that had the ‘three Ss’ (Sun, Sea and Sand); comparing to alternative tourism, it was also less concerned about the environmental and the cultural impacts on destinations (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; E. Cohen, 1978, 1995; Font, 2000; Pearce & Butler, 2004).

Mass tourism – the traditional form of tourism – has fewer responsibilities toward the environment and socio-cultural concerns than alternative forms of tourism. Currently, people are beginning to realize the long-term impacts of the tourism industry – which are not immediately apparent, but can only be discerned with the passage of time¹.

Recognizing this problem, travellers have started searching for less invasive tourism practices.

In short, there is a prevalent demand for alternative tourism today. A widely accepted growing form of alternative tourism is voluntourism (*Figure 3*), where people are able to both enjoy themselves, and achieve noble goals (Stephen Wearing, 2001).

¹ (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Boissevain, 1996; R. Butler, Hall, & Lew, 1998; E. Cohen, 1978, 1987; Font, 2000; Ghimire & Earthscan, 2001; Ross, 1992).

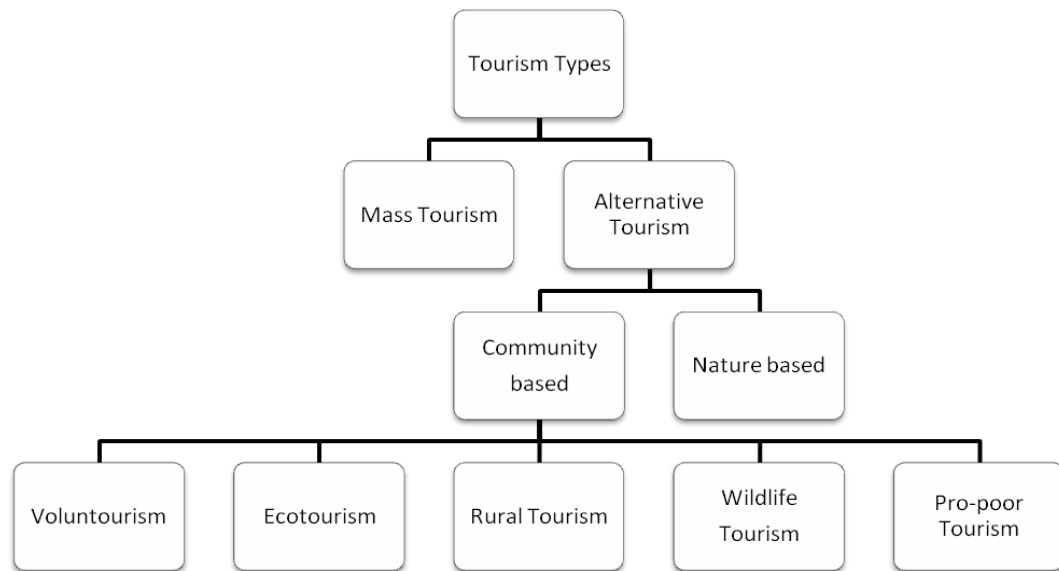


Figure 3: An overview of the Types of Tourism Generated by the Author of this Thesis.

According to the World Tourism Organization (2010), there were around 1 billion tourists travelling worldwide in 2010, and 1.6 billion are predicted for 2020. These figures of mixed (mass and alternative) tourism, indicates a huge growth rate, exceeding four percent per year.

This huge interest in travelling – through so-called mass tourism – carries with it some environmental and socio-cultural negative impacts. Though the increase in construction (to accommodate tourist activities) creates many construction jobs and provides staff for the completed projects in the local community, the money from such initiatives does not always remain in that community. An example of the movement of wealth may be demonstrated by the fact that hotels in tourist areas are generally owned by large corporations, and these popular hotel chains are generally owned and operated

by Western capitalist companies. This increased development may contribute to further environmental damage in the loss of natural resources and green field sites. Moreover, the increased number of tourists brings with it increased pollution from transportation networks - amongst other side effects.

The negative impacts of mass tourism go further, highlighting a loss of cultural identity and traditions; also disturbs the natural evolution of the community by influencing the community with non-local values. Although there are no separate statistical indicators for alternative tourism, it looks like the awareness level of tourists toward sustainable travel and tourism is also increasing. Since there is more demand for friendly forms of tourism, many countries are working on developing varied alternative forms of tourism to sustain their share of the tourism market; voluntourism is just one of the options embraced – others include medical tourism, eco-tourism and adventure tourism.

Voluntourism is about utilizing time and money while travelling to help others (N. G. McGehee & Santos, 2005). It is referred to by a variety of terms, such as: ‘unpaid trips’, ‘ethical holidays’, ‘voluntourism’, ‘voluntarism’, ‘gap year’, ‘volunteer vacations’, ‘volunteer travel’, and ‘charity travel’. Voluntourism is a relatively new form of alternative tourism, one that combines leisure and entertainment, with the idea of developing and helping ‘the other’. Ideally, voluntourism permits a positive relationship between the locals and the tourists. It combines purposeful recreational and learning activities, along with assisting local communities in their development. Moreover, voluntourism, at its best, helps in creating more social justice in essential hubs, like access to food, water, education, healthcare, and social security benefit.

Voluntourism is a creative merging of two of life's most enriching passions. It combines the need to travel and explore the world, with the human desire to help underprivileged people in some of the world's most neglected and poverty stricken countries.

Between 2005 and 2006 the concept of voluntourism hit the mainstream media, particularly in journals and magazines such as *Budget Travel*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Oprah magazine* – which generally draw large female audiences between the ages of twenty-five to fifty years old. Marketing companies, by targeting a distinctive audience, seem to have increased the public awareness of voluntourism trips as an alternative to traditional mass tourism. This increased awareness has then led to significant changes in family vacation planning.

As the data in this research showed, one of the main motivations for tourists to travel and volunteer is the desire to experience an authentic culture. Consequently, this thesis investigates the search for authenticity as a core motive for voluntourists.

A Philosophical Approach

According to Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1977, p. 168), "[t]he spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images ...The spectacle is the main production of present-day societyTourism, human circulation considered as consumption, is fundamentally nothing more than the leisure of going to see what has become banal". It might seem that Debord considers tourism to develop as a natural consequence of the 'spectacle' – that tourism is essentially the commodification of a complete package: first, of the event of travelling (i.e., the service; an entire packaged event: the travel, accommodation, and destination); but then more

metaphysically as the packaging of the ‘experience of a culture’. For Debord, this commodification of culture follows as a direct result of the capitalist society coalescing with mass media, to produce a societally driven selling machine - which forms Debord’s ‘spectacle’.

Debord’s argument details the irony of Western society’s situation. We are living under (or within) the spectacle, are seeking to remove ourselves from the banal and the mundane, by buying further into this capitalist epoch. What we do for our pleasure (and in our leisure) is buying back into that banality for a ‘two-week period’ in order to experience the exciting and exotic.

Tourism is similar to any other commodified product: driven by advertisement, for the accumulation of profit; heritage, culture, landscape and any other tourism attraction are items or services for sale today. Furthermore, in some developing countries, tourism became a part of the agenda of rich countries in applying their neoliberal policies² – in that the selling of culture is only a short step away from the ideologies of neo-liberalism which favour free trade and open markets as the means of dealing with social issues. Commodified forms of tourism in this neoliberal era would not facilitate the tourist to get the best experience, and would also prevent local communities from gaining the necessary benefit from that tourism. This is because individuals, who are part of this current commodified tourism, are no longer witnessing an authentic experience – simply because authenticity in this format is constructed rather than natural. The local community fares worse: being subjected to rising living costs – making accommodation unobtainable; the loss of traditional skills and cultural heritage – reducing cultural

² Neo-liberalism refers to the accumulation of various economic policies that concentrate on diversification of economy by including non-traditional exports, such as tourism. for further discussion on the topic : neo-liberalism and tourism see (Desforges, 2000; Klak, 1998; S. Wearing & Wearing, 2006).

sustainability; an increase in foreign residence – which alters the demographics of small communities; and a loss of employment in traditional areas – are making locals dependant on the tourism industry. Moreover, the level of interaction between host and guest would neither be equal, nor demonstrate any reciprocity (McDonald, Wearing, & Ponting, 2009).

In fact, due to the process of globalization³, most popular tourism destinations worldwide are based on commodification of tangible and intangible materials including, culture, landscape, heritage, and humanity - which are structured and reshaped as ‘goods for sale’. For example, a popular form of tourism is *Sport Tourism*; this form of tourism includes many global sport events such as attending the Olympics. Cities that compete to embrace the Olympics must modify and change their local values and infrastructure in order to meet their guest’s expectations. This opens the door for a potential commodification of the host community local culture. In this context, Short et al. (2000, p. 320) added “[t]he Olympics is a global media spectacle, a catalyst for urban change, and a vessel for conveying and enhancing the host’s cultural identity”.

Studying Tourism: A Literature Review

Voluntourism is one of the alternatives forms to mass tourism. The voluntourism topic intersects numerous fields of research in tourism: tourism and management, tourism impact, tourism and commodification, post-colonial tourism, and sustainable tourism. This review will focus on existing literature related to the phenomena of volunteer tourism (voluntourism), beginning with a review of the literature with reference to mass tourism and alternative tourism, followed by focus on a specific type of alternative

³ As described and predicted by Debord before the term existed, he noted that ‘the spectacle is the chief product of present-day society’(Debord, 1977, p. 16), here he refers to capitalist and global.

tourism, which is voluntourism. Other core topics will be reviewed as well: indigenous tourism and voluntourism motivations.

Mass Tourism

Mass tourism is an umbrella term for the best known areas of travel: the cruise trip, the package tour, and the club 18-30 travel holiday. Tourism has been studied from various perspectives and in many different frameworks, including geography and environment⁴; religious aspects (Swatos, 2002); commodification⁵; impacts⁶; community development⁷; sustainability⁸; socio-cultural dimension of sustainability. However, I want to shift the attention of the literature review to my focus on voluntourism.

Few of the studies have been concerned with the social and cultural impact of the tourism industry⁹, and fewer have addressed these issues regarding voluntourism (Kumaran & Pappas, 2011; Lyons & Wearing, 2008; N. G. McGehee & Santos, 2005). However, mass tourism has been examined extensively¹⁰, since mass tourism is the foremost form of tourism, and currently dominates the industry¹¹.

⁴(Pearce, 1995).

⁵ (Gottdiener, 2000; Shepherd, 2002).

⁶ (Baysan, 2001; E. Cohen, 1978; Deitch & Smith, 1977; Eng & Johnston, 2011; Espejo, 2008; Colin Michael Hall, Hall, & Lew, 2009; Hills & Lundgren, 1977; Mason, 2008; Ross, 1992; Shackley, 1999; Wall & Mathieson, 2007).

⁷ (Bhattarai, 2011; Girard & Nijkamp, 2009; Colin Michael Hall, et al., 2009; Hawkes, 2001; Mason, 2008; Murphy, 1985; Richards & Hall, 2003).

⁸ (Bramwell, 2004; Docherty & Shani, 2009; Duxbury & Gillette, 2007; Girard & Nijkamp, 2009; Harris, Griffin, & Williams, 2002; Hawkes, 2001; Macleod & Gillespie, 2010; Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Rasmussen, 1993; Richards & Hall, 2003).

⁹ (Colin Michael Hall, et al., 2009; Mpofu, 2011; Poser, 2008; Sharma, 2004).

¹⁰ (Boissevain, 1996; Valenzuela, 1991).

¹¹ The idea of volunteering while travelling is a longstanding one; missionary groups travelled hundreds of years ago and volunteered in countless developing and developed destinations. Voluntourism, in the current shape, is quite new - but is expanding rapidly. Most academic literature in this field has been written within the last ten years (Tomazos & Butler, 2010).

Alternative Tourism

Alternative tourism was forged as a response to mass tourism. The impact of the more regular forms of tourism took their time to manifest, and consequently it took time for travellers to notice the negative effects of the massive growth in mass tourism - the growth of which was the necessary outcome of increase in technology, and decrease in travel costs. As awareness of the detrimental effects of mass tourism increased, many people began to search for a less invasive form of travel, and thus, turned to alternative forms of tourism.

As mentioned in the socio-cultural sustainability section, the effect of mass tourism is generally negative on most host communities, Cooper and Ozdil (1992) demonstrated several negative socio-cultural impacts on a Turkish community. Nevertheless, Cohen (1987) despite his pioneering critique of ‘counter-cultural’ alternative tourism, emphasises its necessarily restricted scale and inadequacy as a real alternative to mass tourism. The nature of the rapid increase of individuals choosing to travel in alternative tourism raises the question of whether or not Cohen had sufficient foresight.

It is now twenty-five years since Cohen’s seminal critique, and alternative tourism is now a much larger and influential form of tourism. The natural progression of travellers away from mass tourism and into alternative travel forces alternative tourism to bear the brunt of increased numbers. The light travel-footprint hoped for by concerned travellers is now becoming less delicate, and alternative tourism may be becoming as detrimental as mass tourism was fifty years ago.

It might be worth considering whether part of the appeal of alternative tourism is generated through the 'positive-press' that alternative tourism has attracted. The increased number of participants, drives the formation of more NGO's and tour companies who are aggressively searching to market their packages. This increase in popularity is in direct opposition to the noble ideologies which generated the idea of alternative tourism in the first place.

Butler (1990) further addresses the topic of alternative tourism by questioning the positive connotations associated with the term. Butler argues that the goals of alternative tourism development are very difficult to achieve because determining a proper level of development is very difficult. And even if this level can be determined, there will be constant pressure from developers and tour planners on local officials to expand the scale of development. In addition to this problem, Butler argues that alternative tourism can, in fact, be even more destructive than mass tourism because it implies a much more intensive level of contact between tourists and locals.

Furthermore, alternative tourism activities are likely to be more spread-out than the 'tourist ghettos' that characterise mass tourism which can further increase the socio-cultural impact of alternative tourism. Butler also argues that the predilection for alternative tourism among academics is motivated by class prejudice, and does not represent an objective consideration of the relative merits of mass and alternative tourism. Therefore, he argues for a more balanced form of mass tourism and not its wholesale replacement by alternative tourism. He indicates that the development has the power to enhance the satisfaction, economic return, and the environment if the form, range, and timing are sufficient.

Öztürk (2000) agrees with Butler, and stresses the point that a comprehensive tourism development strategy is needed - one which is based on a deep understanding of the circumstances of the destination. As Öztürk argues: “There is no correct answer, the choice will depend on the country's assets, political systems, size, culture, development stage, external environment and so on” (Öztürk, 2000, p. 319); he also comments, “[i]n order to benefit [the local community], a tourism policy which incorporates a comprehensive and unified tourism model is necessary”. However, echoing Butler, he emphasises that the pressure that governments are subjected to from the alternative tourism and voluntourism industry, particularly in developing countries, greatly reduces their ability to implement a strategy appropriate to the destination. His study focuses on the alternative tourism policies and development in developing countries. Unfortunately, his research was limited in geographical extent.

Voluntourism: A form of Alternative Tourism

Butler had previously noted in respect to alternative tourism that the ‘positive-press’ element might encourage more travellers to specifically choose voluntourism as a travel format. Individuals who are sensitive to cultural sustainability, persuaded by the social scientists’ and conservationist’ positive reports of cultural sustainability of voluntourism, are now wishing to travel on NGOs’ projects. However, the increase in numbers of voluntourists may consequently be decreasing the cultural sustainability they were so concerned about in the first place.

The reason for the increase in the popularity of voluntourism is partly the increasing number of tourism businesses - frequently in partnership with NGOs – who are attempting to protect the environment and indigenous people’s cultures (even if the

end result is profit). These firms label their pleasure trips variously as ‘ecotourism’ (S. Wearing & Neil, 1999), ‘community-based tourism’ (Bhattarai, 2011), ‘volunteer tourism’ (Benson, 2011), ‘cultural tourism’ (Girard & Nijkamp, 2009), or simply ‘alternative tourism’ (E. Cohen, 1987).

Voluntourism is only one of several alternative forms to mass tourism. Western cultures are becoming more aware of issues related to anti-globalisation and environmental degradation (Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012) travel patterns have shifted to focus on the well-being of the host community, rather than only on the wellbeing of the tourist, and that what Wearing (2001) went to.

The topic of voluntourism intersects with numerous fields of research in tourism: tourism and management, tourism impact, tourism and commodification, post-colonial tourism, and sustainable tourism. Wyllie (2000, p. 170) defines alternative tourism as being a possible choice “...to the exploitive and destructive elements of mass tourism and to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably shared with the people of the host communities”.

As individuals have become increasingly aware of the culturally detrimental nature of mass tourism, the popularity of volunteer tourism as a form of alternative tourism has grown significantly over the past decade (N. McGehee & Norman, 2001). Volunteer tourists can now be found throughout the world participating in a wide array of social, educational, political, and environmental projects. As Brown (2005, p. 494) remarks, “[t]he enduring beneficial effects centre around the developments of both self and others, as well as social relationship enhancement”. This interaction between voluntourists and local communities creates, enhances, and encourages a better level of

understanding and cultural communication. However, a contrary opinion is offered by Simpson (2004) who is critical of the phenomenon of voluntourism as a notion and training experience, arguing that it elevates the cultural differences between the host and the guest; specifically the difference between '*us and them*' is stressed in his study.

One last important note remains: the research instrument. In the survey of the literature there appears to be a lack of research using ethnographic and quantitative research methods. It seems that there is a need for ethnographic research that includes multiple-trip participation, long-term observation, strong language knowledge, cultural background awareness, and interviews before and after people engages in volunteering trips.

This study mainly utilised a qualitative approach to research - though for the purposes of secondary data analysis, quantitative methods were also used. 'Motivations' are an important element of this research, and thus, a research method was selected which would engender the most accurate results in terms of data.

Sustainable Tourism

As mentioned before, sustainable tourism is comprised of three main components: economic, environmental and socio-cultural. Socio-cultural sustainability is very much related to the concept of equal access to social services and resources, at the same time, protecting and promoting the local culture of the volunteering destination. However, up until now, there has been no definitive study exploring the socio-cultural impact of voluntourism, although some work does discuss the topic indirectly. McGehee and Andereck (2009) conducted their study of a rural community in the Appalachian Mountains of the United States, and another community in Baja California, Mexico.

In both communities, McGehee and Andereck approached the impact of voluntourists on selected social activities such as healthcare, education and water, and concluded "... that while all respondents are equally aware of volunteer tourism's positive consequences, those with greater education are more likely to be also aware of the negative influences than those with less education" McGehee and Andereck (2009, p. 47). However, they previously mentioned that there is a weak relationship between voluntourism, and its impact on the host community demographic areas under study.

Studies have been conducted which explore the impact of tourism with an emphasis on the socio-cultural sustainability dimension. In regards to socio-cultural sustainability and voluntourism, Marsh (2007), in her project in Thailand, studied 'the voluntourists', and she indicates how voluntourism can be a successful vehicle for supporting socio-cultural objectives to meet the host/guest needs.

Indigenous Tourism

Numerous publications explore the nature and characteristics of indigenous tourism¹² as a means for cultural education, (Bekerman & Kopelowitz, 2008) commodification and cultural sustainability, and poverty alleviation (Scheyvens, 2010).

Furthermore, Notzke (1999, 2004) studied the challenges which face the indigenous groups in developing their own tourism programs and products in the Arctic and in Southern Alberta. Whilst Notzke recognizes the challenges faced by these groups, she sees the development of tourism as a route to emancipation and empowerment. She also considers, in detail, the methods that these groups have used to maintain the sustainability of their culture while developing tourism products. Furthermore, she notes

¹² (R. Butler & Hinch, 2007; Notzke, 2006; Ryan, Aicken, & service, 2005; Suzuki, 1984).

the importance of 'authenticity' to both tourists and to the host community, stating that "[t]he authenticity of this tourism experience represents a major asset as well as a significant management challenge" (p. 55). Finally, Notzke acknowledges that better management practices are needed in order to ensure the success of these Aboriginal tourism ventures.

It seems to follow from the literature that authenticity appears to be a core motive for the tourist who targets an indigenous community destination. Due to the fragile nature of indigenous cultures, they are susceptible to the impact of any traveller. Further, they are equally susceptible to travellers who chose to travel through any form of alternative travel, including voluntourism.

Voluntourism: Motivations

The literature review revealed two distinct approaches to examining motivation that represent two disciplinary perspectives: psychology and sociology.

A popular theory of human motivations in psychology, Maslow's hierarchy of needs¹³ developed by Abraham Maslow, demonstrates that motivations are both the mental and emotional needs, and a feature which stimulates an organism to act toward a desired goal - which in turn gives purpose and direction to its behaviour (Maslow, Frager, & Fadiman, 1970).

Examining motivations from a sociological perspective shows that there is a mixture of factors arising from an individual's socio-cultural setting which may control

¹³ Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory in the field of psychology, presented by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper A Theory of Human Motivation. Maslow later completes this idea and generates his remarks about humans' natural curiosity. His hypothesis matches other hypotheses of human developmental psychology, most of which centre on describing the phases of growth in humans. Maslow, in a hierarchy classification, employs the terms: Physiological, Safety, Belongingness and Love, Esteem, and Self-Actualization needs to illustrate the model that human motivations generally progress.

someone's motivations. Examples of these factors include reference groups, social class, family pressure, the social order, and the culture. Consequently, the sociology of tourism is a fundamental topic at this point - as is the topic of authenticity (discussed later).

Jointly, sociology and psychology add to an understanding the motivations of a tourist; the two perspectives complement each other. Yet, it is important to become aware of the multiplicity of social and cultural influences which might impinge on a tourist's motives.

From a marketing prospective, customer motivations can be defined as the desires, wishes, drives, and needs of an individual that direct her or him towards the purchase of a tangible product or intangible service; motivations may be physiologically, psychologically, or environmentally driven (Woodside, 1999).

Crompton and McKay (1997, p. 427) define tourism motivation as, "A dynamic process of internal psychological factors (needs and wants) that generate a state of tension or disequilibrium within individuals." Jamal and Lee (2003) examined the micro and macro features that control tourist motivation. Macro features focus on the wide social forces which encourage people to take a break and go on touristic trips, while the focal points of micro studies are the mental and emotional dimensions. For instance, the 'search for authenticity', or the need to break away from daily routine are macro and micro factors which motivate people to travel.

Understanding various tourist motivations is important for the travel industry. For example, the study of tourist motivation originated in the fields of marketing and tourism management, and sought to understand the motivation of the tourist in order to better plan, develop, and market the tourism product. This approach draws on cognitivist and

behaviourist psychological methods, and is represented in studies such as that by Gnoth (1997), who investigated the motivation of tourists and how targeted destinations were able to respond in order to better meet those motivations and expectations.

Alternative tourism is insufficiently described by previous motivation research. An ethical prospective should now be considered – in addition to the traditional viewpoint. The emergence of alternative tourism has significantly altered an individual's motive to travel, as it now presents them with a very different set of travelling options. Thus, people in the tourism industry are under pressure to adjust their planning and marketing strategies in order to provide a comprehensive tourism experience.

However, such strategies must also go beyond relatively simple considerations of profit maximization and consumer satisfaction, and consider the importance of authenticity, cross-cultural communication, and the socio-cultural impact of the industry. For example, Tomazos and Butler (2010) consider voluntourism in terms of the Monomyth, or Joseph Campbell *Hero's Journey*, describing how the challenges of voluntourism allow the participants to engage in a rite of passage, and fulfil a need to help 'the other'. The authors also view the motivation for voluntourism as being similar to the aristocratic notion of noblesse oblige¹⁴, where participants seek to balance the privilege of their wealth through helping the disadvantaged.

Setting

The reserve is set in 17.5 square kilometres of ground nestled in the foothills of the Canadian Rocky mountains (Government of Canada, 2007), and has a gentle river

¹⁴ 'Noblesse oblige' is a French phrase used to mean that prosperity; authority and status lead to responsibility. In the cultural dictionary: defining noblesse oblige "the belief that the wealthy and privileged are obliged to help those less fortunate." In English, the term is occasionally applied more generally to propose a wide-ranging obligation for the more privileged to help the less fortunate.

running through it. The setting is particularly pretty in the spring, when many of the wild flowers have sprung, and the grass is green from the snowmelt and spring sun. The reserve is also home to many wild animals, including horses and deer.

The reserve, despite its large numbers of inhabitants, is a very quiet place, and the researcher was struck with the lack of people who were about the community in their day-to-day business. However, the researcher often saw young teenagers smoking marijuana in front of some of the community buildings – often the administration building. Smoking was ubiquitous on the reserve, with very young individuals partaking in the habit, and though drinking alcohol was never observed, a large number of the residents appeared to be drunk, but did not appear to be violent or belligerent.

During discussion with the inhabitants, all those in the community who spoke with the researcher self-identified as aboriginal - and most were observed respecting a more traditional spirituality, despite the presence of a Christian church building in the community. Interestingly, this building, though little used by the inhabitants of the reserve, was renovated as part of the GCN project at the site. Many members of the community kept a spiritual ritual, which consisted of rubbing scented material in their hands and onto their clothes. This item, which is probably sage or sweet grass, had a strong odour, and could be smelt for some time afterwards. One of the doors to the church had a broken padlock, and the church seemed to be used for other functions. When viewed by the researcher, for instance, the church had a very musty, unclean smell, and there was a small stage where the altar would normally be. On top of the stage was a full drum kit, piano and other musical instruments (*Figure 4*) and there was also garbage spread across the Church lot – despite its recent renovation.



Figure 4: Inside and outside Eden Valley's Church.

Political and Economical Profile

There was no apparent significant wealth evidenced on the reserve. From the interviews, it was evident that there was a significant unemployment rate. In 2006 it was reported that, of the population fifteen and over, only twenty-nine percent were employed, while thirty-four percent were unemployed - leaving thirty-seven percent of the population who were not in the labour force (Government of Canada, 2007). This left Eden Valley with a seventy-one percent unemployment rate.

Consequently, the median yearly income for the total population fifteen years and over was \$9,152, compared to \$18,335 for the general Alberta aboriginal population (Government of Canada, 2007). The overall condition of the majority of the reserve seemed to confirm this general lack of money. However, many were able to purchase, or

otherwise acquire alcohol and cigarettes, while at the same time collecting food donations, which were stored at the administration offices.

Forty percent of family income in 2006 was the result of government transfers, compared to just thirteen percent for the general Alberta aboriginal population in the same category. In 2005 the median monthly household income was \$300-400 per month (Government of Canada, 2007). The general lack of expendable income was apparent throughout the site. Most vehicles were older, and in poor condition. Often vehicles were seen abandoned outside a property and these vehicles often had broken windows and missing parts. There was no constant house size, but the condition of the houses was similar. The houses that were larger were in no better condition than some of the smaller dwellings.

The Stoney Nation

The Stoney Nakoda Nation comprises individual members of the Bearspaw First Nation, the Chiniki First Nation, and the Wesley First Nation. The Stoney Nation Website (2012) (Stoney-Nation, 2012) briefly describes their identity as:

We are the original “people of the mountains” known in our Nakoda language as the ***Iyarhe Nakoda*** and previously as the ***Iyethkabi***. We are called by many different names historically and in current literature:

Stoney Nakoda (incorrectly as Stony)

Mountain Stoneys (or Sioux)

Rocky Mountain Stoney (or Sioux)

Warriors of the Rocks

Cutthroat Indians

(in Plains sign language, the sign of cutting the throat)

or ***wapamathe***

Historically, our neighboring tribes designate the Stoney Nakoda as “Assiniboine,” a name that literally means “Stone people” or “people who cook with stones” (Stoney-Nation, 2012).

The Nakoda Nation living in the Eden Valley is the most northwestern Siouan speaking people of the Great Plains (of North America) who form part of the Sioux-Assiniboine-Stoney language continuum, which has three main dialects – Dakota, Lakota and Nakoda. From the 1670's (the fur trade era), these people were known as both the 'Wood Stoney' and 'Mountain Stoney'. It is entirely possible that, in this time of nomadic wanderings, the Nation components would meet and interact with one another – a little later on, the Nation tribes would trade fur pelts with white settlers in exchange for European goods. Though the Nation forged alliances with the Woodlands and Plains Cree, the long-time enemies of the Stoney-Cree-Assiniboine alliance were the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani and Tsuu T'ina Nations) – the Indian tribes surrounding the university of the researcher (see the Stoney Nation website) (Stoney-Nation, 2012). The researcher has witnessed that this hatred persists through today.

In September 1877 at Blackfoot crossing, the Bearspaw, Chiniki and Wesley signed Treaty 7, although two treaties actually were signed (Treaty 6, agreed August 1876 – signed August 1877). The three groups were limited to settling on reserve lands in the vicinity of Morleyville (later Morley), the home of a Methodist mission. However, at that time, the Stoney's Territory ran as far south as Montana and Idaho, and west into British Columbia. The southern camp of the Wesley people were known as the Dixon Band, after their Headman James Dixon, and it was these people who later formed the core of the Eden Valley Reserve.

Administrative affairs were held in full control of the Stoney's chief by 1968 under the new self-government policies of the Canadian Government. Due to a loss of

hunting, trapping and burial grounds from a hydro-electric dam, the Canadian Government awarded the Big Horn People¹⁵ 1,277.91 acres, although the government did not acknowledge their aboriginal and treaty land claim. Funds received from gas royalties “encouraged ranching, sawmill operations, tourism and business opportunities.” (Getty, 1983). The income from the gas industry peaked at \$50 million in the early 1980’s, though it has steadily declined to a current level of around \$12 million (Getty, 1983); according to Getty the money was used to increase infrastructure, and a large portion of it was used to purchase more land for the S.T.A.R. ranch.

Historically, cross-cousin marriage was acceptable, and polygyny was also practiced in the Stoney Nation (Getty, 1983). The Stoney were plains hunters, who unlike many of the other tribes of Canada, relied heavily on fish for their diet. They also hunted plains animals, and in the fur-era, traded the pelts for European goods as well as with other tribes for items of need. Before modernizing with the rest of Canada, the Stoney Nation would live nomadically in tipis of various constructions – predominantly the three-pole-plains tepee, but also semi-permanent encampments where permanent pole and moss dwellings (Getty, 1983).

Spiritually, the Stoney people performed sun dances and other ceremonies. Their spirituality was incorporated into every area of life, and included the naming of children, quests, rites of passage and vision quests. However, the spirituality was reduced upon the arrival of western missionaries. Much of their spiritual belief still remains, and many

¹⁵ The Stoney Nation comprises different groups and is situated on a number of reserves. The Big Horn Reserve is situated west of Nordegg in the Kootenay Plains. This reserve was set aside in the late 1940’s, and though the Elders were promised additional lands, the reserve has remained the same size from its inception.

activities are still performed including vision quests, the use of a sweat lodge (*Figure 5*) and the symbolism of feathers.



Figure 5: A Framework of Branches Linked Together to Form the Frame of the Sweat Lodge. (Photograph taken by Steve Firth)

Description of the Sending Organisation – Global Citizen Network [GCN]

There are many groups and organizations (NGOs) of various types that are concerned with voluntourism. These groups are relatively uncontrolled by laws or regulations. The NGOs are usually interested in organising voluntourism trips, promoting the idea of volunteering while travelling, and spreading an awareness of the opportunities offered by this form of travel. Moreover, the role of the NGOs in shaping the

voluntourism industry is essential. Below are topics that led to my interest in studying the GCN and their position on voluntourism.

The idea for the formulation of GCN was forged during the first Earth summit in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro. The founders of the organisation felt that the community development could be done at a smaller scale outside larger NGO's or without governmental funding – that is to say, using more traditional methods of community development. There have been five directors since the founding of the organisation; the current director, who was interviewed during research for this project, has held her position for six years.

The main objective of GCN was to interact with indigenous groups, and thereby gain a new perspective into other cultures.

GCN founding was inspired by Margret Mead's quote: "A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has". It [GCN] is an organisation that connects the globally-minded (and the adventurous) with indigenous communities worldwide. GCN gives teams of volunteers the chance to work side-by-side and build relationships around the world with members of indigenous partner communities (Global Citizens Network, 2012).

Indigenous communities were chosen as the program focus because of their cultural 'uniqueness' as compared to more mainstream cultures. The researcher concluded from the interviews with GCN members that cross-cultural communication was the main purpose of GCN's programs. They also demonstrated sensitivity to the maintenance of cultural stability of the visited communities. John, an interviewee from the sending organisation (GCN), noted:

".... One of GCN's missions is to advocate for social justice and give a voice to marginalized groups..... the primary purpose of GCN programs is cross-cultural exchange..... a major area GCN has

worked in is cultural preservation....”

Another mission for GCN is to advocate for social justice and give a voice to marginalised groups; and for that reason, they target indigenous communities. GCN specialises in cultural preservation work in Aboriginal communities around the world. As their mission statement reads: “In partnership with people of diverse cultures, GCN promotes cross-cultural understanding and interconnectedness through authentic immersion experiences”¹⁶. Unlike some other organisations GCN seeks to organise community-led voluntourism projects.

The organisation only provides volunteer opportunities; however, many participants choose to extend their stay beyond the volunteer period and engage in more traditional tourism on their own initiative. Nevertheless, GCN has struggled to maintain a mutually beneficial relationship between the participants and the host community - as both parties are required for the program’s success. GCN’s incorporation under the IRS (Internal Revenue Services) registers GCN as a charitable organisation, which means that it cannot focus primarily on participant amusement, and instead must maintain its focus on volunteering, regardless of any negative impact this may have on participant application numbers.

The original intent of the organisation was to act in co-operation with indigenous communities with marginalised populations as a sign of solidarity. This was based on the desire to help indigenous people preserve their cultures. The organisation sees its role as one of advocacy. The organisation has been able to maintain this direction because of

¹⁶ For further details, see the GCN’s vision and mission in their main portal: www.globalcitizens.org.

the small number of volunteer organisations who work with indigenous populations, affording it a market niche in the growing field of voluntourism.

GCN's development projects tend to focus mainly on construction, as the organisation prioritizes such construction endeavours due to the tangible long-term benefits to the community - as well as their requiring a relatively small investment of capital and labour. In the Eden Valley reserve, GCN's contributions were mainly the renovation of community buildings and exchange of cultural customs. This was the case with the projects they undertook for a length of three years at Eden Valley, although the projects were originally initiated and planned by the host community administration.

Operating in over 20 countries including North America, Latin America, Asia and Africa, GCN is looking to start new projects in the Middle East, and it is likely that they will increase the number of projects steadily over the coming years. One of the founders of GCN is, himself, originally from Egypt, and according to one of the interviews conducted for this study, the organisation has specific interests in forging projects that cater to a hitherto unaddressed area of the world.

Each project team is structured in 'grassroots' initiatives that are partnered with the host community. Both the volunteers and the host community members work and learn together to complete projects that meet the host community's needs. These side-by-side projects are conceived and instigated locally, with the initiation of topics being directed by the local community.

GCN provides its team members with training materials, awareness sessions and a full orientation at the beginning of the trip. Moreover, every group is comprised of a team leader and a number of other members. The team leader is fully trained and has

experience in running volunteer projects; a translator and cultural consultant are also provided if necessary. Accommodation may vary: occasionally the teams are split into pairs and find lodging with a host family, otherwise camp accommodation is provided. Some participants have the opportunity to sleep in traditional dwellings – such as the tipi in the Eden Valley project.

GCN's trips may be short duration (one – two weeks) but may also extend to months. The group size is mostly between six to twelve people plus team leaders, and travelling is offered to individuals of all ages – including youths, if a parent or guardian can accompany them. The organisation offered twenty-seven trips in 2011 and 2012, and throughout their numerous sites around the world.

As for costs, a fifteen day trip into Nepal (Pokhara Valley) will cost around \$2700, with a twenty-one day trip to Kenya costing as much as \$3000; the cheapest travelling package is to Arizona, which costs around \$1200. However, any individuals under fifteen will receive a fifty percent discount. These prices include most meals, airport pick up and accommodation, but do not include the cost of the flight.

The founders of GCN had a vision of providing a way for US Citizens needing to increase their global cultural awareness and build an international friendship. Voluntourism was seen as one way of achieving this goal. In order to initiate a project, the organisation must first be invited by the host community. This does not pose a problem as they generally receive a large number of requests from indigenous communities around the world on a weekly – and sometimes even daily basis. The organisation takes into consideration state department travel advisories, but depends more heavily on host community advice as to the safety of the site. The organisation chooses

destinations not only based upon the host community's need for volunteer assistance, but also based upon the appeal of that culture as touristic destinations. For example, a project site in an African country, like Kenya, may have easy access to safari activities.

The Eden Valley Project

This research project was chosen since it is the first of its kind in Canada and it is taking place in a developed country - which is unusual for volunteering projects as they usually take place in the developing world.

Lori Craig is an experienced voluntourist, a Human Resource director for the Stoney First Nation (Nakoda Sioux), and the founder of the Eden Valley project. Craig's initiative began when she was volunteering for GCN. After completing her volunteer term she contacted the director of GCN, Linda Stewart, and suggested that GCN start a program in Canada, and more specifically with the Stoney Nation. She thought it might provide an attractive host community because of its unique culture. In particular Craig believed that the Stoney Nation's high retention of their native language would be of interest to volunteers. Stewart expressed an interest in the potential program, and so Craig contacted the administrator of Eden Valley to inquire as to whether the community would be interested in inviting GCN to start a program there.

Craig also selected Eden Valley because choosing a single isolated community would hopefully reduce the amount of political conflicts¹⁷ the project might encounter, and because the leadership of Eden Valley had previously expressed strong interest in the project. Craig then received the official invitation from the Eden Valley Chief and

¹⁷ Despite Craig's hope for a politically stable community, the event was cancelled in 2011 due to disagreements between the administration and the community. This prevented the researcher from taking part in the project.

Council. In order to gain the support of the local community, Craig held a lunch event in which she explained the project and hoped to garner the help of community volunteers.

There also has been a noticeable effort by a local Canadian volunteer organisation, the Canadian Executive Service Organisation (CESO), which does not specialise in voluntourism. CESO is also a not-for-profit, Canadian volunteer-based organization providing social and economic development expertise to Canadian Aboriginal Peoples.

In the case of Eden Valley, the GCN was approached by a woman working with the Stoney Nation offering an opportunity for volunteer participation. GCN proceeded to confer with the Stoney Nation elders and sent an exploratory team of roughly five people to Eden Valley, and received community consent for the project.

Operations in Eden Valley commenced in August 2007. This is the 5th year that a project has been held at this site, though one was cancelled in 2011, during the field research period, through unexpected circumstances which were unrelated to GCN.

GCN works to sustain indigenous culture by ensuring that they send a volunteer group every year, even if participant numbers are low. Throughout the Eden Valley projects, group composition has been highly diverse in terms of age and origin, with participants ranging from ten to seventy-nine years old, and coming from locations across the USA and Canada.

Information from the interviews about the structure of the volunteering project at Eden Valley was undertaken as part of the research for this paper. When responding to the question of whether or not volunteer participants are assigned duties according to their pre-existing skills, 'Diane' responded that participants were able to volunteer for

whatever elements of the project they desired. But if a participant's skills coincided with the aims of that element, they would be more likely to join in. For example, two men who were a part of the Eden Valley group volunteered to participate in the painting project on the basis of their previous painting experience.

GCN's website emphasizes the time spent immersing in a culture. The Eden Valley project is no different, and GCN offers "... plenty of time to get to know the local community in your own way" (Global Citizen Network(2012). The website offers participants the opportunity to "explore the eastern slopes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains," and reminds participants that they can stay if they would like to explore more of "the site, the countryside, and the people." GCN mention that meals will be prepared by team members, although some will be shared with the community as well. Highlights of the trip for the participants include bannock, beading and experiencing a pow wow, while the community benefits from their interaction with participants as well as working together on community earmarked projects such as building improvement.

For the Eden Valley trip(s), the participant's fees cover airport pick-up, project transportation, accommodation, cultural orientation, contribution to a community project and project administration. However, fees do not include airfare, travel insurance, permits or visas (if required). GCN's website has the following tag lines designed to give prospective participants an indication as to the demographics associated with the Eden Valley Project:

Family Friendliness: *High*

Required Travel: *Travel*

Kids: *Many Kids*

Lodging: *Communal*

Language: *English/Stoney*

A trip to Eden Valley costs a participant \$1200 (plus travel costs). However, returning participants get fifty percent off, as do those who register at least four months prior to the trip. Children between eight and fifteen receive twenty-five percent off, and groups of four permits one person to go half price, whereas in groups of eight people, one person travels for free. The 2013 trip is planned to run for seven days in August.

Chapter Three: Methods

Research Methods and Strategies

This research project employs both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative methods are based on the analysis of data collected from secondary sources while qualitative research methods are based on primary data from ethnographic and virtual ethnographic observations, as well as semi-structured interviews.

Research in the social science field is based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976). The quantitative approach is an investigation into a social or human dilemma, based on testing a hypothesis composed of variables, measured with numbers, and explored with statistical measures, in order to establish a theory (Creswell, 2009). Concepts, variables, and hypotheses in the quantitative approach should be developed at the beginning of the research project (Creswell, 2009). It might be interesting to note here that while scientists in the classical fields of science prefer to rely upon empirical evidence, logic and data, anthropologists question the validity of such dependence on data – arguing that data interpretation is, itself, a subjective event despite the objective nature of that data.

However, for purposes of this thesis, it may be more beneficial to focus on an inter-personal level; qualitative research can better provide an understanding of people and situations (Merriam, 2002). Creswell (2009, p. 15) defines qualitative research as:

... an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

A qualitative approach is characterized by some subjectivity – in utilizing personal interactions, rather than quantitative statistical data in its investigation (Bryman & Teevan, 2005).

For the above reasons, as well as others, this study mainly utilised a qualitative approach to research. ‘Motivations’ are an important element of this research, and thus, a research method was selected which would produce the most accurate results in terms of data. In this case, it is easier to determine the feelings of those involved through personal interaction, than through quantitative analysis.

Moreover, this study focuses on qualitative research to determine the subtle holistic and widespread nature of voluntourism’s intervention into a culture – such information is indiscernible from discrete quantitative data sets. The industry of voluntourism is a relatively new field, and due to the ‘new-ness’ of the industry, it is often better investigated through qualitative methods, prior to it being further investigated by quantitative ones.

Ethnography in qualitative research is an interactive and face-to-face technique, which involves the researcher spending a significant amount of time steadily observing, examining, monitoring, questioning, interacting, and interviewing with the subject. Furthermore, data collection strategies in ethnography concentrate on what the phenomenon means to the locals, but not necessarily to the observer (Creswell, 1998). From the literature reviewed for this thesis there seems to be a lack of ethnographic research in the field of voluntourism. Qualitative research, specifically focusing on an ethnographical approach, was therefore, important for generating precise information.

The researcher of this thesis would have preferred the opportunity to have participated in the Eden Valley voluntourism project in order to collect a richer source of data. However, due to the cancellation of the project in 2011, it was not possible to take part; but the researcher made many trips to the Eden Valley Reserve in order to interact directly with the local community. Over 30 trips were taken to the site at Eden Valley to meet community members and interact with the community administration. From June until November 2011, observations and interviews were conducted providing qualitative data for the purposes of this study. These trips to the volunteering destination, where the researcher was able to fully interact with the host community, permitted him to receive a more comprehensive experience from which better ethnographic research could be produced.

The trips conducted into the community made the researcher aware that a greater understanding of the destination's characteristics and cultural background was required to adequately answer the research question. Such visits helped build a better understanding of the local community and the motives and experiences of the voluntourists. Furthermore, spending time in the field helped the researcher employ appropriate data collection methods.

Observation

In this ethnographic study, two main associated qualitative research methods were used: observation and semi-structured interviews. Secondary data sources were also utilised, and supplemental information related to the project was acquired from websites and online data. Governmental publications and statistics, blogs and portals that discuss topics on voluntourism, and websites about the fieldwork were examined to provide the

researcher with a greater understanding of the subject of voluntourism and its necessary outcomes.

As indicated earlier, the selection of the site was a function of this project's proximity and accessibility to the researcher's university and home. In addition, the NGO concerned with organizing the voluntourism project was known to the researcher for its interest in Aboriginal based projects, and for its responsible attitude to cultural sustainability. The Eden Valley Reserve was, therefore, a natural choice.

Authorizations were obtained both from Eden Valley's administration office as well as the Office of Research Services at University of Lethbridge. Consequently, some research into those permissions required was undertaken. Once determined, all of the requisite paperwork was submitted; no site activity was commenced prior to permission being in place.

Having decided upon the site for the research, the researcher visited Eden Valley twice to speak with members and leaders of that community to discuss with them the most appropriate time for the research to be conducted. These discussions considered the timing of the visits, the most suitable number of visits, the duration of the visit, and which premises were best to visit. The community was made aware of the skeleton plan, and how the researcher planned to observe interactions, take notes, and at a later date, interview willing participants from both the community and the voluntourists. Regularly, the researcher made observations between 8:00am and 4:00pm - these times were when the members of the community services and participants were both available.

A good researcher should attempt to observe everything and take notes on as much as possible while maintaining a focus. Most paramount on the list was the tangible

and intangible outcomes of the voluntourism trip conducted in Eden Valley. The plan was to conduct both participatory and non-participatory observation. However, due to the aforementioned cancellation of the volunteering project for the year 2011, the researcher conducted his observations without participating in the volunteering project.

Tangible outcomes are the physical achievements of volunteering projects, such as the renovation of the church and the painting of the community centre in the Eden Valley reserve. Intangible outcomes refer to the preservation of the local culture, such as learning how to cook the local food (bannock), beading or experiencing a local dance (pow wow). Over the thirty or so trips made to the reserve after the volunteering trip was over, the researcher closely inspected the tangible outcomes of the GCN project, as well as the reaction from the community to those outcomes. Although the trips were not always made for the express purpose of observation (many trips were made to conduct or arrange interviews), the researcher continued to record data from observations he made during all of the trips.

The researcher, during the observation period, recorded information, symbols, and physical settings - including his own reactions. Many of these notes were taken on notebooks, but some of the notes were also recorded on an MP3 recorder. Photographs were also taken of interesting and seminal moments, such as the impression the researcher received upon visiting the church and upon seeing the wild horses; photographs of the community buildings and local wildlife were also taken – some of which are incorporated into, and included in this study.

Maintaining a neutral and non-invasive stance was important. The relationship between the researcher and the key members of the community, as well as those of the

NGO and the volunteers was pivotal. To build such positive ties, the researcher spent significant amounts of time establishing friendships and amicable relationships with many of the people in Eden Valley. The ‘snowball strategy’ was productive in allowing the researcher to integrate himself into the community and make contact with the key individuals involved. This facilitated introduction to other members of the community – which in turn, broadened the area of research. During the course of the study, meetings and interviews were conducted with both males and females, teenagers and the middle-aged, community members and officials. A semi-informal interview was held with a community elder. However, similar to many people in the community, the woman did not know about the project – or even that there was, or had been one (*Appendix 5*).

The last phase of observation was to inform the people who were involved in the research, that the data collection has been completed and thank them for their participation or efforts.

Interview

“A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and experience, not only for the interviewer but also for the interviewee” (Patton, 2002, p. 405).

The interview is the most commonly employed method in qualitative research (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). According to Kvale & Brinkman (2009, p. 2), the interview is a ‘construction site of knowledge’ where two or more individuals converse and chat about a topic of common interest. In his book *Doing Interviews* Kvale (2007, p. xvii) describes an interview as: “...a specific form of conversation where knowledge is produced through the interaction between an interviewer and an interviewee”.

Bryman & Teevan (2005, pp. 70-71) list the structured interview as the main type of research tool encountered in both survey research and qualitative research; they define

six main forms of interview: the semi-structured interview, the unstructured interview, the qualitative interview¹⁸, focus groups, an oral history interview, and the life-history interview. However, Marshall & Rossman (2011, pp. 142-154), in addition to the generic in-depth interview, categorize interviews thusly: the ethnographic interview, the phenomenological interview, the focus group interview. Moreover, both authors consider life histories and narrative inquiry as in-depth interview methods. The benefits of the semi-structured interview are well documented, and because of their applicability in gleaning information post-project, they were used heavily by the researcher.

To provide the maximum amount of information, the study incorporates information from multiple areas – consequently the in-depth, un-structured interview was also employed in information gathering. Wide cross-sections of people were interviewed to provide the maximum amount of data. The interviewees were from three groups (*Appendix 3*): community members, participants, and GCN staff. They were interviewed in the most suitable method for the interviewee. This meant some interviews were conducted face-to-face, while others were conducted through internet methods (Skype). The face-to-face interviews were done at the interviewee's convenience and in a comfortable environment – some were even conducted on the stairs of a house. More information about the demographics of the interviewees is provided in *Appendix 3*.

Virtual Ethnography

The interview method usually chosen in social research is often the 'face-to-face' method. However, for marketing research or government studies, telephone interviews are often used (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Anthropologists use unstructured face-to-face

¹⁸ For other researchers, qualitative interview is the equivalent to unstructured interview.

interviews to obtain data from their key informants. Sociologists, such as Charles Booth employed unstructured, face-to-face, interviews to develop a social survey (Liamputtong, 2011). Computers are now commonly used in the interviewing process (Bryman & Teevan, 2005). Computer technology and the internet may be used for data collection and data analysis. In addition, the internet itself may be utilized as a research site (fieldwork). All of the above methods were utilized in the research of this study.

Virtual ethnography, computer software, and the internet assisted in the research for this study by providing significant information, including facilitating the interviewing of certain participants.

Virtual ethnography or internet ethnography emerges from the basic principles of ethnography. It is known and considered as a method for carrying out qualitative research, in which the internet itself is a site for research (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, pp. 24-26). Anthropologists tended to use virtual ethnography as an approach of applying traditional methods, such as the observation and interview in a new framework.

Angrosino (2007) pointed out in his book *Doing Cultural Anthropology* that anthropologist use virtual ethnography as a research tool; for example, Elizabeth Bird(2003) conducted virtual ethnographic research to examine the role of the media in portraying ‘American Indians’ [sic] and how people react to these images.

In this study, the researcher partly used internet electronic communication, or ‘virtual ethnography’ to conduct interviews with voluntourists and sending organisation individuals. Eleven interviews were carried out using virtual ethnography (*Appendix 3*). Additionally, e-mail communications were employed to support the data, as well as the analysis for selected portals (websites) and online documents

It was felt that the best way to collate information from the participants, and some of the host community was to do so after the Eden Valley project had ended. There were multiple reasons for this – not the least of which was the availability of interviewees. Consequently, the largest collection of data was retrieved from the post-project interviews. These interviews were completed by a variety of methods, (mentioned previously) and were intended to focus on the comfort of the interviewee. The researcher found that the technology was a significant facilitator to his research, and the interviews were privately recorded so that a full transcription was available at a later date so the content of the interview could be focused on.

The arrangement of the interviews was facilitated by telephone and e-mail. For some individuals, the flexibility of computer and the internet interviews fit their schedule, and also allowed them to return home after the project was completed. For others, face-to-face interviews were preferable.

The interviewer had prepared a list of questions, which were central to the research, but also used multiple questioning techniques to acquire as much information as possible. The interviewees were all made aware, in advance, of the type of questions that would be asked (*Appendix 6*), and also told that questions might become more focused around specific areas of interest. Prior to commencing the interview, subjects provided their permission to be interviewed; a signed consent form was also completed (*Appendix 7*).

The participants were asked questions they had been made previously aware of, in a manner they were most comfortable with, and in a place they were most comfortable.

Consideration was given to the duration of online and other interviews, with rest breaks provided as necessary.

Internet and Computers: The Ethical Issue

Protecting the anonymity and privacy of the participant remains a major issue of internet data collection, and, in fact, any interview situation. Hacking is a common phenomenon in the World Wide Web. Marshall & Rossman (2011) note that the researcher cannot guarantee that the data collected will be destroyed after finishing the study. Pertinent information might be automatically stored on an external server without the researcher's knowledge. However, whilst no electronic data storage is completely secure, the research for this thesis employed significant precautions to secure participants' privacy: codes were used to identify participants – instead of names, interviews were conducted in a private room, and recorded interviews were stored in a protected format in a personal laptop.

This thesis, in sum, relies on observational processes and interviewing. Two levels of observation were considered in order to collect the data. The first level is where the researcher conducts observation as an observer; the second level permits observation as a participant. The first level was completed between June and November 2011. The second level was removed from my proposal due to the unexpected cancellation of the project in summer 2011.

Throughout the observations, the researcher identified the physical achievements of previous voluntourism projects which had taken place in the Eden Valley reserve. Necessary data were also collected to provide this study with background information concerning voluntourism projects on the site. Another important goal of the observations

was to prepare for the interview phase. The observation period allowed the researcher to generate themes related to the research question.

The interview subjects were split into three groups: the local community in Eden Valley; voluntourists who participated in volunteering projects in Eden Valley; and employees from the sending organization Global-Citizen-Network. Twenty-three¹⁹ interviews were conducted. The details of the group demographics are presented in *Appendix 3*. Two interviewees from the Eden Valley community were also participating in volunteering projects (they were both voluntourists, and members of the local community at the same time) operated by GCN. The researcher made sure to include Eden Valley's people (especially those who had participated in previous voluntourism projects), officials and employees in the reserve, local and overseas voluntourists (including Eden Valley voluntourists), and facilitators (sending organisation – GCN).

The local community interviewees were mostly women between their late teens and middle age. Some were employed, but the majority were unemployed; most had an entry level of education; and most of them lived on the reserve. By contrast, the voluntourists were mostly in their early twenties, though they ranged upwards to sixty-nine. Again, most were female; most also had a good standard of education, and those who were not students were employed.

The GCN staff were mostly female and middle aged; again, all of them (except one retiree) were employed held. Only some of GCN staff were actually volunteering for GCN – while others were employed by them. Many of the GCN staff had been working with the organisation for some time and were generally positive about their work and

¹⁹ The actual number of interviews was 21. The remaining two (to make 23) were interviewed on site as part of the local community, but they also participated as 'voluntourist participants', and were interviewed as such.

achievements. The research for this paper included an interview with a director of the organisation, a woman who was the researcher's key contact for the organisation. She did not participate in the project directly on-site.

The key contact for the Stoney Nation, however, was male, and was one of the two representatives who did not live on the reserve. He was the administrator for the reserve, and had been in that position for less than two years. By comparison, the contact for GCN had held her position for over 6 years. However, he was unfortunately replaced before the research commenced in earnest. There was a secondary community key figure, a day care worker for the community, who linked both the reserve administration and the community in general. This individual was a female community member who lived on the reserve. Through her it was possible to deal more intimately with the community members, whereas the key administration figure was able to facilitate permission for the study and suggest other key members of the community through a 'snowball-strategy'. This key figure was generally very positive about GCN's work in the community and was supportive and enthusiastic about the Eden Valley project.

Both the GCN and the local community were able to suggest other key contacts for participants of the Eden Valley project. However, there was no key informant for the volunteering participants. The impression from a large number of participants was generally positive, though a few commented that they would enjoy a greater length of trip in order to further interact with their host community.

Generally speaking, intra-community communication about the project was quite poor; consequently, there was a lack of involvement in the project from the community. That said, those members who were involved were positive and happy to welcome future

similar projects. It must be stressed that several of these projects have been run at Eden Valley, and though GCN communicated with the administration of the Stoney Nation, it seemed that the information stalled somewhere between the administration and the members of the community.

Ethical Approval

Potential participants including Global Citizen Network (the sending organization) were then contacted to arrange data collection. Usually, a second follow-up e-mail was sent to the potential participant in order to finalise the interview time and date.

Before conducting an interview, a consent form was examined and signed by each interviewee including the ‘virtual interviews’ that were conducted over the internet (Skype). The interviewees were made aware of their ability to exclude themselves from the study at any time without a penalty of any kind, as documented in the consent form included in (*Appendix 7*).

Limitations of the Methodology

Though most of the data were provided from the interviews, many other techniques were used to record information. Significant data were recorded from the observations, but much more information could have been achieved through observations were the researcher able to visit the community during the project – better still if the researcher were able to take part.

The methodology contains data from a limited number of interviewees. A greater understanding of the outcomes of this project (and others like it) would be discernible if a greater number of people from all groups were interviewed. Unfortunately, this would probably increase the process time of the data, and incur scheduling issues.

The study was limited in immersion time. The brevity with which the project took place limits the interaction between the host community and project participants (and therefore reduces any outcome variables). From an anthropological point of view, the longer an event or study takes place, the more comfortable the host community and others involved become with the presence of the researcher; moreover, the amount of data collected vastly increases.

Chapter Four: Data and Interpretation

Introduction

This chapter presents the results obtained from observations, interviews, and secondary data, relating to the motivations for taking part in voluntourism and the impact on cultural sustainability of voluntourism in Eden Valley.

As indicated in chapter two, interviews were conducted with three different groups: voluntourists, community members, and the sending organisation (GCN) employees. The voluntourist group consisted of ten participants, the community members group seven, and the sending organisation group six people.

In relation to the project setting, there was a ‘western’ (in the American sense of the word) appearance about many of the inhabitants. The men were often seen wearing cowboy hats, western style shirts, blue jeans and cowboy boots. The clothes did not appear to be new or high-end, and were often well-worn. The majority of the community buildings, with the exception of the school and the Health Canada building, were sparsely decorated and furnished, and the administration building was noticeable for lack of furnishings appropriate to a building of its function.

The researcher had a meeting at the administration building with the main administrator. The researcher was required to wait for forty minutes or so in order to conduct the meeting. During this time, the researcher wished to use the washroom facilities at the building. The key was first obtained through the secretary, and upon entering the washroom, it was apparent that there had been no cleaning of those facilities. There was no sanitary way that the facilities could be used. Moreover, the general condition of the room itself was distressing. Physically being in the room was an

uncomfortable experience. The building regularly housed five or six members of staff who were often seen to be serving another five or six clients. In the opinion of the researcher, the washroom facilities were in no way appropriate for such a significant number of people. In contrast to that, the new Health Canada building was tidy, clean, well presented and the washroom facilities were openly offered and very clean.

Issues Related to Voluntourists.

Pre-trip Investigation

Seven interviews were conducted with voluntourists who have participated in Eden Valley voluntourism projects. Interviews with program participants (voluntourists) demonstrated their general understanding of the topic voluntourism; however, they also displayed confusion with respect to larger structure of the voluntourism industry and were not always aware of the ramifications of their travel to a host culture. In responding to the opening question, “What do you know about voluntourism, and how would you define it?” the responses were varied and mixed, with no specific understanding of the term ‘voluntourism’. For example, Eden Valley project interviewees (voluntourists) remarked:

Sara: *“I’m not sure what the term voluntourism means; my concern is to help others”.*

Jack: *“Voluntourism is the performance or the act of travelling and helping developing communities”.*

Sandy: *“....It’s is a way to contribute something in our life”.*

Maya: *“Voluntourism is the best way to learn about other cultures”.*

Lean: *“I see voluntourism as an opportunity to help others, especially children”.*

The result of the interviews shows that interviewees are aware of the term ‘voluntourism’ in a general sense. This understanding includes a central theme, which is helping ‘others’.

Participants were asked if they did any investigation about the sending organisation and the targeted destination before they decided on their trip. The entire group had used the Internet to research for information specific to that trip. However, some of them had completed extensive research, such as Maya, who spent a few weeks - which she considered a sufficient time to learn about the destination and the sending organisation. Some of the participants did not feel that they needed to research the sending organisation as they had already travelled previously with GCN.

Researcher: *“Did you do any pre-trip investigation”?*

Maya: *“Yes I did”.*

Researcher: *“Can you explain, please”?*

Maya: *“Well, I went through different sending organisation websites and portals, and I checked [out] their programs.....it seems that GCN are special in their focus on indigenous cultures, and this is what I’m looking for”.*

Researcher: *“Cool, so how many times did you do this investigating, and how far was that from your travelling date”?*

Maya: *“.....about ten different times and [a] few weeks before my trip”.*

It seems that these individuals make some effort to research their trip prior committing to it. However, this sort of research is not always undertaken by all tourists: regular tourists may investigate the best place to stay, or the countries with the best weather (sun, or snow etc.), or the most secure locations.

What is different is the type of information which is researched before voluntourists commit to their trip; voluntourists seem to have a greater interest in the authenticity of their experience, the reputation of the sending organisation, and are, if just

a little, sensitive to the cultural footprint they might leave behind. There also seems to be a distinction in the motive for travel. Individuals who volunteer expect a certain level of ‘self-fulfilment’ contributing to the betterment of ‘others’, and to ‘explore a culture in its fullest authenticity’ through their experience. In contrast, most mass tourists travel simply for the sybaritic nature of travelling; an external observer, Steve, noted:

Steve: *“When I travel, I don’t mind spending a huge amount of money on a luxurious and relaxing time – I’ll happily buy a five star hotel in Kuala Lumpur for fourteen days; spend money on nightclubs, entertaining trips and experiences - but I doubt you could get me to spend the equivalent amount to live in a ground tent and work to build a water supply for a community who are busily minding their own business. Its not that I am against humanitarian work when its needed. If some natural disaster had befallen a place, or a war has reduced their infrastructure to the ground, and if someone covered my flight costs – well, then I’d be the first in there. For me, it is [the holiday] just about relaxing and enjoying myself; resting on a beach, by the hotel pool, or drinking martinis in the lounge – then maybe hitting up the scuba diving, or parascending. It’s **not** about taking 14 days off work to do more work”*

Female Engagement

The key people amongst the Eden Valley project and the sending organisation were females - indeed, from the first and second groups, thirteen out of seventeen interviewees were female. This indicates the stronger involvement of women in the voluntourism industry. Moreover, only one out of six among the third group (sending organisation) was male. The demographics indicate that female interest in voluntourism is greater than male interest, and therefore, their contribution to the industry remains higher than that of males.

From the data collected, women who were attracted to voluntourism tended to be influenced largely by their female friends. Due to a large increase in articles and advertising in women’s magazines, women travellers have been encouraged into

voluntourism. A GCN member noted: “[A] female audience in North America increased the awareness of the voluntourism phenomena as a new form of tourism.” These influenced females have perpetuated this recent interest with their friends, and this in part, is the reason for the current inclination to volunteer and travel.

A former voluntourist (Kim) and participant in the Eden Valley project encouraged her colleague at work to travel and participate in volunteering projects:

“ I was coming back from a volunteering trip to Pokhara in Nepal.....I was having a coffee with my colleague, who asked about my trip and if I liked it?....I explained more about the trips to her, and how these programs are a great opportunity to help people and feel better”

Judy, who had also participated in voluntourism projects before, spread the word and encouraged her sister to try a voluntourism project.

“.....My younger sister is [now] interested in volunteering with me in any up-coming opportunity. She’s always wanted to travel and see genuine cultures and people....We grew-up in Chicago where life is busy and hectic...”

Data on Motivations

The Context of Voluntourism, and its Motivations in the Eden Valley Project

Interviews with outsiders (participants who are not from the Eden Valley reserve) demonstrate that participants chose to come to Eden Valley because they were searching for a genuine and original experience. More specifically, they were looking for *objective* and *existential authentic* experiences related to the Stoney Nation’s culture such as, experiencing a tipi (also teepee and tepee) accommodation (*Figure 4*), meeting several locals (*Figure 5*), and learning the Stoney’s local dance (*Figure 6*). Also, they wanted to discover themselves (“a special existential state of being in which individuals are true to themselves” (Wang, 1999, p. 56).



Figure 6: Voluntourist in Front of a Tipi



Figure 7: Voluntourist Interacting with a Local Girl from Eden Valley.



Figure 8: Volontourists Learning and Experiencing the Stoney Nation’s Local Dance (Pow wow).

The observations and interviews show that Eden Valley’s culture has been offered as an integral element of the volunteering trips by the sending organisation to the voluntourists. However, the sending organisation ought to be made aware of the potential cultural commodification which their schemes may engender. Because of the repeated presence of tourists, the cultural characteristics of Eden Valley residents might be transformed, and thus Eden Valley may lose its authentic value (real authenticity). However, this loss usually happens through mass tourism – in that mass tourism carries large numbers of tourists, which creates cultural packaging, and is then presented to the tourist as a commodity. Further discussion on the commodification of voluntourism will follow later in this chapter.

Data collected from the interviews conducted with voluntourists reveals an interest in authenticity and a desire to learn about the host culture. Interviewees were asked the question: “*Are you participating in these trips to learn about the Stoney culture? If yes, what do you want to know and why?*” Many of the responses were very similar, but were consistent in that a main motivation was the search for authenticity. The data from the interviews (from which the quotes below are drawn), and the headings below have been collated into one table and presented in *Appendix 5*.

Kim: “... *I wanted to experience a different way of life.... I’m keen to learn about indigenous cultures and more about the Stoney Nation’s food, and stuff.*”

This desire to seek out indigenous cultures is indicative of this search for authenticity – though it only references one element of authenticity, that of learning their traditions.

Nancy: “...*one of the reasons that encouraged me to take-part in this trip is to have a quality experience...*”. “*Volunteering trips are more valuable to me if I can have a more genuine and authentic experience...I don’t really know much about Canadian first nation spiritual practices, but I was curious to learn more...*”

The religious aspect of a community is very interesting to travellers. Many of the tourists to the Vatican are non-Christian, but have a distinct interest in visiting the city to experience its ‘authenticity’. Indeed, many people who are non-believers often seek to locate their faith by travelling to religious locations to bathe in the authenticity and find a true religious belief. The researcher in the past has spoken with many individuals who were unconvinced by the propaganda or negativity about a particular religion, and have chosen to spend extended periods of time immersed in that culture to learn the ‘authentic’ version of that religion, and its followers.

Maya: “.... *although it’s possible to see and learn about aboriginal cultures through the internet and other media, it’s a different experience to visit those indigenous communities and experience their culture closely I wanted to see their [the indigenous people] method of life and how they maintain their traditions*”.

A common reaction to a brief encounter with a culture - say from a book, or television program – is the desire to see *more* of that culture. A common example of this is Machu Picchu in Peru. Travellers are often persuaded to travel there because of the photographs in books and magazines, and book holidays to facilitate their hunger for a more authentic experience. Trips to Machu Picchu are mostly mass tourism-based, but travellers of mass tourism sometimes share the desire to experience authenticity.

In voluntourism and in the case of the Eden Valley project particularly, authenticity appears as a separate motive and a key factor for most individuals to choose voluntourism over mass tourism (*Appendix 5*). Authenticity may be experienced as a tangible event for some individuals during their participation in volunteering projects. That authenticity develops solely from social construction links authenticity in a fundamental way to the study of tourism in anthropology. Firstly, authenticity could be described as ‘constructive’, which is to say, a result of a socially constructed experience of culture. Secondly, it could also be described as ‘objective’.

The researcher, here, see authenticity refers to the representation of culturally specific elements in order to crystallise them into ‘objects’ – such as a monument, or items of traditional dress. Finally, there is ‘existential authenticity’, in which, as the words imply, tourists would attempt to immerse themselves fully in the culture by living and eating the manner of the culture. This latter definition of authenticity has been provided by (Wang, 1999). Unlike constructive authenticity, which is created by the host community, existential authenticity is created by the tourist. It seems that authenticity

appears to be a central motive for many voluntourists. It may be that voluntourists are also more sensitive to cultural sustainability; in other words, voluntourists would help in preserving and promoting the local host culture, as in turn, this maintains the social and cultural sustainability of the destination.

The Search for Authenticity

Authenticity has been discussed extensively in the tourism industry.²⁰ Indeed, Cohen (1988) remarks that authenticity, and the search for unity, link the self with societal institutions - a phenomenon which gifts pre-modern existence with a 'reality'. Curiously, Debord (1977) had identified a very similar connection. Instead of forging a link between a pre-modern existence and the desire of tourists to experience and connect with a past they cannot have (though have a 'virtual'²¹ understanding of), Debord notes that the desire to experience an older way of life gives justification to the capitalist modernisation which the West currently hungers for; it is a way to remember why it is we chose to progress in the way the Western world has. It appears that authenticity may stand for the search for the 'real' or 'original' experience of tangible objects and intangible experiences.

The concept of '*authenticity in the host community*' might be seen by anthropologists to be representative of a Western 'pre-conception' of that community. This pre-conception might represent an idealised or stereotypical representation of a culture - often in an exotic location, but might equally be found in a non-White community in a Western country - such as in Eden Valley. This expectation is often

²⁰ (E. Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007; Getz, 1998; Halewood & Hannam, 2001; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Wang, 1999; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008; Xie, 2003).

²¹ Virtual, in the sense of an internet, television, or book understanding of that culture – a rather distant, and remote understanding.

utilised by those cultures that desire to portray life in that community in ways that match the expectations of the mass tourist – in fact much of the profit generated in mass tourism is derived from the desire to commodify the cultural ‘image’ associated with that country.

This desire to meet expectations might be partly responsible for repressing the cultural growth of a host community. The host community may desire to modernise in the natural way their community would ordinarily do, but are instead ‘held back’ by catering to the needs of visitors who wish to see the culture as they *imagined* it would be. Thus the effect of mass tourism would seem to be more culturally damaging than the effects of voluntourism.

Based upon the data collected from interviews, it seems that although voluntourists often conduct pre-trip investigations in order to prepare for their trip to a certain destination, nevertheless, they are still susceptible to pre-conceptions of an unvisited destination. Upon reaching this destination they often expect that their preconceptions would be met.

In the case of Eden Valley, this preconception was satisfied by events like the participant’s ability to cook and eat ‘local traditional foods’ which were jointly prepared by both participants and the local Stoney Nation people. It might be the case that the favourite local food of the Stoney Nation is KFC (and therefore not representative of the ‘local foods’, but rather ‘historic traditional foods’ cooked as part of the group event). Nevertheless, both the host community and the participants interacted in the making of the traditional foods. The local community cooks were able to demonstrate a significant part of their history and culture (even though it may not be what they actually eat every

evening for supper). The participants were also able to invest themselves in a host community and experience elements of their culture which met with their expectations.

A distinction ought to be made at this juncture, between the outsiders' interpretation of what they think (or would like to believe) is representative of a culture – but is in fact, a more *idealised* or *romanticised* notion of this culture – and the reality of how that culture is expressed. For instance, an *outside* opinion of the *authentic* (what might we might call 'perceived authenticity') Welsh culture might imagine a brown haired girl in brightly coloured traditional dress and stovepipe hat carving a 'love spoon' for her betrothed. In reality, an *authentic* (what we might call 'real authenticity')²² Welsh girl might work at a Tesco supermarket, and argue with her boyfriend about forgetting to buy the milk. Similarly, a visitor keen to remember his or her vacation to an Arabic country, might wish to purchase an *authentic* local handicraft in the form of a carved wooden camel; however, in reality, the wooden camel is not carved by a local community professional, but is instead a mass produced item made in China, and sold by a capitalist tourist shop in that area.

In Eden Valley, the participants often had more realistic expectations of their host community (though it appeared tinged with notions of the 'doomed-noble-savage' and the desire to assist the host community). This notion is partly representative of a participant from a western community wishing to assist the host community to become more westernised, while retaining the quaintness of its cultural heritage. This assisted modernisation of a host community may detract from a more natural cultural

²² In describing the motivation of the participants to find authenticity, it may become difficult for the reader to follow which 'authenticity' is being discussed. In this study, 'Perceived- authenticity' exists in three flavours: *Constructive*, *Objective* and *Existential*; its counter is 'Real authenticity', and it describes a contemporaneous and real description of events in a culture.

development and affect the cultural sustainability of these people, and the result may therefore, be culturally damaging.

MacCannell (1976) is a pioneer in addressing the relationship between tourism and authenticity and its socio-cultural dimension. He indicates that tourists search for authenticity by viewing their travel as a form of pilgrimage. He sees contemporary tourists as seeking authenticity, which is often offered to them as ‘staged authenticity’ – a fake frontage that covers the actual backstage to which the tourist has no access. Cole (2007, p. 944) defines authenticity as “a Western cultural notion associated with the past ‘primitive Other’ articulated in opposition to modernity”. Authenticity is always present as a direct and indirect motive for travellers. In fact, in looking at varied forms of tourism (cultural, historical, religious, rural, ecotourism, and voluntourism), it is clear that authenticity emerges as a major factor driving tourists to visit selected destinations.

Cultural Concern

Another major motive that drives voluntourists to participate in volunteering trips is the desire to communicate with other cultures. The voluntourists interviewed in the Eden Valley case show clear concerns about cultural matters and aspects. Among these matters and aspects are cultural awareness, cross-cultural communication, cultural preservation and identity protection, and cultural promotion for the host culture.

The sending organisation (GCN) has worked in different projects, and a major area of its concern is in cultural preservation. Specific programs have focused on preserving the native languages of North American aboriginals, particularly through assisting with transcribing efforts.

From an anthropological prospective, the phenomenon of voluntourism may be seen as being a function of a certain individual's cultural background – in that some western countries culturally encourage their citizens to contribute to non-western cultures. For example, sixty percent of the voluntourists who were interviewed by the researcher volunteered during their travelling more than once, while thirty percent did so more than three times, and in one case more than seven times; John²³, for example, has been participating in voluntourism projects over a decade. Generally, tourism for some people is a lifestyle choice. They may often travel to a certain destination on a regular basis (the researcher has travelled to more than twenty-five countries, and he is planning to visit more destinations. Wearing (2001) pointed out in his book *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences That Make a Difference* that voluntourists frequently decide to repeat their volunteering trips because of having positive experiences, the networks they build, and their acceptance from the 'others'.

Many of those who volunteer through their travel are concerned with the cultural heritage loss. This goes further to cultural preservation, and promotion – and culminates in the general notion of cultural sustainability. During the interviews, a recurring theme was cultural concern, though it was often expressed in concerns of a more specific nature. John, for instance was interested in language, but his concern really falls under a broader topic of 'cultural concern'.

John (GCN staff) commented:

“...A major area that GCN has worked in is cultural preservation, and this is one of the reasons I chose to work with them....When I volunteered, I was always concerned with host languages that were dying out. Just a few years ago, here, we lost the last lady from an Inuit

²³ For the purpose of the participant's privacy, real names will not be used, instead pseudonyms are used in this thesis.

*community - she was the last of her nation to speak her language fully....
There are lots of people like me, and I think that's a big issue."*

Unique Experience

With the competition and the wide range of volunteering trips currently available, selected voluntourism-sending organisations offer programs designed to attract the individuals. Voluntourists want to discover and enjoy inimitable experiences: they are searching for the unique; they want to learn about their destination's cultures, as well as being able to assist in the development of their destination. Voluntourists, especially young ones, are interested in enriching and shaping their experience throughout volunteering trips. The ten participants interviewed for this study expressed an interest in gaining an experience from their trip to Eden Valley.

Participants in the Eden Valley volunteering trip learned various Stoney traditions such as drying meat, bead work, tee-pee building, flute making, round dancing, traditional cooking (including the making of bannock and buffalo stew), and traditional storytelling and language learning. These activities were oriented towards promoting an understanding of the uniqueness of the Stoney culture so as to encourage participants to champion its preservation. However, although voluntourists seek a unique experience, many are also strongly motivated by the desire to help others.

Luisa : *"...I chose the Eden Valley project and other voluntourism projects because I want to help people, get out from the daily routine, and experience new cultures.... something different...something innovative."*

It is often the case that people do not have a specific interest; sometimes they just want something that is not found in their home country. However, they also feel that they need the 'real-deal' and wish to throw themselves into a location where they absorb the entirety of that experience. Indeed, Debord (1977) referred to this when he said that

our travelling today is “nothing more than the leisure of going to see what has become banal.” It might be considered an odd switch, but we are often curious about new cultures and experiences – however, those cultures we visit are often less advanced than ours, and we now consider them out of date and “banal”. This difference between the traveller’s home culture and the host culture may be significant, and it is this difference we are actually seeking to experience. A common English saying sums this concept up nicely: “A change is as good as a rest”.

Helping Others

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Observations and interviews from this study show that: firstly, helping ‘*The Other*’ is a core concern for project participants; secondly, voluntourism offers travellers a chance to experience giving, or giving back on vacation; thirdly, voluntourists help others while touring their destination; finally, volunteers do not come with specific skills as they are not screened on the basis of technical skill sets, but rather on the basis of their health conditions and their expectations of the programme.

The ‘helping the other’ framework appears to be an important issue conjoining the participant’s skills, with their desire to help others. In other words, volunteering trip organizers ought to employ the right skilful participant on the right trip. As I mentioned before, volunteering projects have various objectives such as, but not limited to: educational, healthcare, ecological conservation, cultural preservation, and community development. Further discussion is provided in the Data and Interpretation Section.

By definition, voluntourism carries two major components: travelling and volunteering - the latter is defined as helping others for free. The observations and

interviews support voluntourism as being a tool for helping other people. The physical achievements of Eden Valley's volunteering trips are a testimony to this finding.

However, in the case of Eden Valley, the 'want to help' is combined with the desire to learn about 'the other' culture. Data from the interviews demonstrates the interest in contributing to the host community.

John remarks: *"In participating in voluntourism I get more out of these trips than I'm required to contribute, it's a very meaningful experience.... it [voluntourism trips] gives me the opportunity to help others and learn about their culture...."*

Sara added: *".....why not enjoy my vacation and help people at the same time?..."*

Self-Healing

Six out of the ten participants interviewed for this study on the Eden Valley voluntourism project were outsiders, i.e., people not from the host community. All of them believed that voluntourism is an opportunity for self-healing. By helping other people, a positive atmosphere emerges which makes the individual feel better, and consequently, they reported being positively impacted by voluntourism trips. However, further research should be conducted to define these impacts, and how they affect the volunteer's behaviour and life.

One of the main purposes of this research was to explore and understand the impact of voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism on local communities. Furthermore, it was designed to examine the validity of the phenomenon of voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism.

Though it is possible to detail each motivation individually, it is much more likely that a voluntourist is influenced by several motives, and maybe some that do not appear as major motivations – such as an individual’s desire to see a particular destination because they thought it might be very beautiful

It seems that many voluntourists decided on their trips to alleviate some internal strains. Life sometimes throws curve-balls, and individuals often need to retreat somewhere to allow them to deal with their issues. This opportunity is often granted through a voluntouring project, and many of the interviewees have demonstrated a need to ‘clear their head’ from matters in their daily routine.

Jack explained: *“I’ve recently lost a close member of my family, and travelling here allows me to think about things at a slower pace. I think it might help me get over it.”*

Sara added: *“It makes me feel better when I help people.”*

Maya commented: *“For me, volunteering is an opportunity to enrich myself.”*

John said: *“Volunteering my time and money has a spiritual meaning, it helped me to recover from a sad experience that I had not a long time ago.”*

Suzan added: *“....I participated in this trip to add meaning to my life...”*

In common with most volunteers, the need to realise some self-healing is a primary motive. There is something psychologically gratifying about helping those in need. Whether this is due to a biological imperative, or an evolutionary social development is unimportant: altruism remains a strong human action, and the cathartic nature of volunteering and altruism provides deep self-healing.

As the increasingly secular Western world tends to produce less religious individuals, often the lack of a spirituality or religion is replaced with the catharsis found

in volunteer work. Voluntourists are able to doubly benefit from this, as they are also able to travel away from the influences of their native land, and are therefore less susceptible to being reminded of the cause of their worries

Data that Reflect the Socio-cultural Sustainability

Earlier in this thesis, the socio-cultural dimension of tourism and voluntourism were explicated. Socio-cultural sustainability refers to the 'equal access' to basic needs such as education, healthcare, clean water, and affordable housing. It also, references an 'individual capacity' - in that voluntourists, throughout their trips, have the opportunity to gain new experiences and help themselves in developing skills which are beneficial to their life and even profession. An example might be practicing teaching and the honing of people management skills. Also, the socio-cultural dimension refers to a 'group capacity' which permits group interactions such as cross-cultural communication and team building.

Sustainability in tourism describes the minimization of the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impact of the tourism industry as a whole. Voluntourism appears as an alternative form of tourism that helps to reduce the impact of the industry on a host culture, and supports the sustainability of that culture by encouraging the traveller to contribute, during their travel to targeted destinations.

Eden Valley residents were generally positive in their views of the voluntourists and the volunteering projects in the reserve. For example, the locals of Eden Valley were amazed and pleased with the efforts that the voluntourists and the sending organisation have made to help in renovating the Church and other community buildings. Moreover, GCN provides targeted destinations, such as Eden Valley, with any necessary materials

or supplies for their projects and encourages the local community to participate along with voluntourists during the project. Interviews with Eden Valley members indicate their appreciation to the sending organisation as well as the voluntourist. Amanda commented:

I am pleased to see these groups [voluntourists] coming to our reserve to learn about our cultures. I'm also pleased to see them coming to help us. I learn new things from those visitors and even I knew new things about my culture which I didn't know before. When we [group of Eden Valley's residents] were preparing for the dancing event I learned few dancing techniques which I never knew! All in all, it was [voluntourism project] a good opportunity for me to know my culture and other cultures.

Another young interviewee (Maya) from Eden Valley added:

When I participated in GCN's projects in our reserve, I had to prepare the food for one night.... the food was mainly our [Stoney Nation] traditional cooking....I had to prepare the bannock, fry-bread, [and] berry soup. Two girls [among the guests] helped me in the cooking and we enjoyed doing that as a group....that was the first time to cook that amount of food so I asked my mother to help me, who came and handled things....I learned from this event more about our traditional cooking.....I will be very interested to do this [participating in voluntourism projects] again...I feel happy sharing my culture with others.

It seems, from the evidence above, that the volunteering projects in Eden Valley Reserve were an opportunity for the local people to know and remember new things about their culture. Also, the Stoney people in Eden Valley integrated with their guests on different levels; they were keen to learn more about their culture and they were interested to exchange their culture with voluntourists. This, again, seems to be a big support for the local culture in Eden Valley and helps in sustaining it.

GCN's project in Eden Valley contains various activities such as: general maintenance for the reserve facilities, learning various Stoney traditions such as drying meat, bead work, tipi creation, flute making, round dancing, traditional cooking including

the making of bannock and buffalo stew, and traditional storytelling and language. These activities were oriented towards promoting an understanding of the uniqueness of the Stoney culture so as to encourage participant to champion its preservation.

Data collected from the Eden Valley fieldwork demonstrated that voluntourists were, generally, interested in helping the reserve with the renovation and maintenance of their buildings (*Figure 9*). The data, also presented keenness from participants to develop their skills and learn new abilities that might assist in them in developing their career – which, again references the ‘individual capacity’ angle (*Figure 10*). Group capacities were clearly demonstrated during the volunteering trips in Eden Valley, and were evidenced in group cooking events, group dancing, and group gathering during recreational activities (*Figure 11*). This group gathering was particularly noteworthy as it permitted a greater cross-cultural interchange, and a greater opportunity to impart knowledge on both sides in a very relaxed atmosphere.



Figure 9: Voluntourists Renovating and Paints a Community Building.



Figure 10: Voluntourist Developing Painting Skills.



Figure 11: A Group Cooking Event Permits Cross Cultural Exchange and Develops Cookery Skills.

Based on the evidence provided by analysis of the data, it appears that volunteering trips to the Eden Valley supports the socio-cultural sustainability of the Eden Valley, and therefore suggests that voluntourism – at least in this project – is both culturally and socio-culturally sustainable. However, the Eden Valley project did not permit some of the volunteers to contribute to their full capacity as the nature of the activities at that location was limited.

Throughout an interview with Sara - who was interviewed based on her volunteering in Cambodian projects – it was clear that she was incredibly keen to educate the local children by teaching them the English language, and to educate smaller children through play.

The experience [in voluntourism teaching] I will get there – I want to teach – is important to my future career, as I really want to end up working there; and that experience will benefit me in my degree in Comparative Education..... [Canadian] children take for granted what they have – I found that out painfully in my PS3. I think - well, I feel that children over there [Cambodia] actually want to be taught....they know they need it more than kids here. You can see it when you are with them. They have a hunger to learn. I was going to be a math teacher here in Canada, and it's so surprising how quickly the kids pick it [mathematics] up when you play games with them. I just have to draw things on the ground – make a game out of it – and they get exactly what I mean. It's so fulfilling. I didn't get that from them [students] here. They just aren't interested in learning here – no matter how much fun you try to make it. It's sad really.

Also, Sara emphasized that volunteering in such a significantly different environment provided her with teaching and communication skills that could not easily be learned – even at a University that specialised in Education - and, as such, her skills would be

improved by gaining an extensive teaching experience unavailable in a traditional environment.

Voluntourists are often, excited to learn about their host community's culture – and as such represents a significant motivation to volunteer while travelling. Likewise, targeted communities (including the Eden Valley) are equally interested in promoting and preserving their cultural values by demonstrating them to the guests. Before volunteering trips take place in Eden Valley, community individuals involved in the project prepare potential activities that suit the needs and expectations of the voluntourists which is, at the same time, an opportunity for those community members to learn about their culture. Once more, the GCN project in the Eden Valley included preparation for cultural dancing, traditional food preparation and cooking techniques. These preparation processes, help in preserving and promoting that First Nation's local values. This clearly demonstrates the cultural protection and endorsement which supports the cultural sustainability of the reserve's inhabitants.

The search for authenticity is - more often than not – a huge influence on a voluntourist, and represents one of many tourists most significant motivations. An element of authenticity interesting to the volunteers at the Eden Valley project was the resident's native language. Several of the participants interviewed expressed an interest in experiencing this very 'real' expression of culture.

Among voluntourists, an elderly woman who was fascinated by the Stoney's language noted:

I'm always simultaneously fascinated by and interested in North American cultures. I'm interested in being familiar with other languages such as the Native American languages. During my trip to Eden Valley I learned new Native American [Stoney's] words...in Stoney's language,

water means “Mini” and sun means “Wi”.... I enjoy learning about other cultures.

Moreover, the interest in language shows a particular sensitivity to the protection and promotion of cultural heritage in a vastly globalising world. This sensitivity represents the very essence of socio-cultural sustainability. Voluntourists, who travelled to Eden Valley, were interested in learning about the Stoney’s culture, and more specifically the Stoney’s native language. During their trips in Eden Valley reserve, voluntourists interacted with the Stoney people and learned new words in the Stoney language. Not all the Stoney people can speak their language fluently, and the volunteering events were an opportunity for them to learn and practice their mother tongue. Maya (a young interviewee from Eden Valley) noted:

I am not sure if there is a written script for our language..... I have even no clue how to write, maybe because we have no writing system..... currently, I’m writing some words [indigenous words] in English letters....I was so glad to share my little language knowledge with our guests [voluntourists]....I practice and I knew new words which I had to search for them and ask my granny many times about many words.

The language preservation and promotion throughout Eden Valley volunteering project supports cultural sustainability – in that some of the local community (Stoney people) learned and search for new words, practice these words, and try to write them in the original alphabet. This restoration of language aims to make it available to coming generations and protected from extinction which is an effort toward sustainable development.

The protection and promotion of an indigenous community original language is a major concern of GCN. Data collected for the Eden Valley project corroborates the connection between a desired goal of the NGO, and both the host community and the participants. One of the GCN employees remarked:

“Another area which GCN has worked in is cultural preservation. A focus of these programs has been preserving the native languages amongst North American aboriginals, particularly through assisting with transcribing efforts”

Throughout the interpretation of data provided from interviews, and along with the informal interviews and other qualitative research methods employed in the data capture for this thesis, it is clear that there exists support for both sides of the sustainability fence.

On one side, it seems that the focus on preservation of languages, traditional values, techniques and other cultural practices permits a cultural sustainability through voluntourism. Likewise, the interaction and gentle atmosphere which was pervasive throughout the Eden Valley project permitted a high level of socio-cultural interchange. This was facilitated by events that naturally engender a positive atmosphere such as traditional dancing.

However, there are also a few detractions from socio-cultural sustainability. As participants for the Eden Valley project came mostly from North America, a clear divide in ‘quality of life’ was evidenced. The contrast between the way of life of the host community, and the way of life of the participants, was significant. Even the researcher himself, was profoundly affected by the disparity between life in nearby Calgary, and the quality of life he witnessed on the Eden Valley reserve.

Directing Voluntourism to Developed Countries

As previously mentioned, voluntourism usually takes place in developing countries; yet there are also cases where voluntourism projects are conducted in developed countries. Voluntourists, in most cases, travel from industrialized and developed countries toward developing (and/or undeveloped) destinations through

specialized sending organisations and NGOs. Because Americans host the largest number of the voluntourism-sending organisations, they are considered to be leaders in voluntourism. Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and some Europeans are also active voluntourists.

As discussed earlier, voluntourism trips range in length from one week to numerous months depending upon the voluntourist's vacation time, financial ability, and trip availability; for career or educational reasons, most trips are usually a one or two week event. Voluntourists cover their own trip expenses, including transportation, accommodation, food, and any other applicable costs. However, there are a few sending organisations that cover some costs and support occasional entertainment programs in order to attract tourists. On the Volun-Tourism blog, David Clemmons (2012) wrote:

"We have already seen voluntourism at work in the developed world. Following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, we saw a veritable explosion in the influx of voluntourists to the U.S. Gulf Coast region. Estimates have put the figure at greater than 2 million persons who have ventured to volunteer in support of local residents impacted by the storm. Australia, New Zealand, and Japan have also seen an influx of voluntourists in the aftermath of a flood, an earthquake, and a tsunami, respectively, in those three developed countries. With no destination immune to natural or man-made disasters, voluntourism will likely find its way into more areas in the developed world in the years to come"

However, three of the Eden Valley study's interviewees (group three) indicated that voluntourism is more suited to developing countries - as developed countries are more culturally homogeneous and generally wealthier. Therefore, the opportunities for cultural exchange and reciprocation are reduced. While this point may be valid, it seems appropriate that more voluntourism is conducted in areas of need in developed countries (and less in developing countries) even though their need may appear more long term.

Certainly, if finances were to be considered, then it would clearly be more cost effective for travellers to volunteer domestically than to spend money travelling great distances to contribute – more ‘bang for the buck’. Sociologically, any division between those in need, and the more fortunate might be reduced through an increase in domestic volunteering. If a function of volunteering while travelling is self-healing, and contributing to others in need, then surely the destination element of this form of travel is self-serving – otherwise we would see a much larger desire to assist in all areas of the world – including those areas of need in developed countries. From an informal discussion unrelated to the Eden Valley project, but still on the topic of voluntourism, Sara (a former and continuing voluntourist) explained:

I'm not really interested in helping out here [Canada], as I really enjoy Cambodia, and a very important part of going [there] is to experience their culture - as distinct from the more familiar one here. The experience [in voluntourism teaching] I will get there – I want to teach – is important to my future career, as I really want to end up working there; and that experience will benefit me in my degree in Comparative Education..... [Canadian] children take for granted what they have – I found that out painfully in my PS3. I think - well, I feel that children over there [Cambodia] actually want to be taught....they know they need it more than kids here. The kids here get it free, but don't care anything about it [education].

Clearly, Sara is referring to her motives to travel. She is expressing the notion that she wants to experience an ‘authentic’ culture, and one in which she has a specific interest. However, her remarks simultaneously speak to the desire to blend her interest in teaching children with the need of the children to be taught – demonstrating her cultural concern, search for authenticity, her drive for a new experience, and her desire to help children.

Another interesting element is the ‘emergency situation’ effect. Large natural disasters like the tsunami in Japan, and the hurricanes in New Orleans have provided an

international sounding board, in the form of mass media, which have spawned the desire of voluntourists to join relief operations in these damaged areas. These relief ventures may satisfy the same sorts of desires which lead an individual to volunteer while travelling: helping the other, self-healing, and cultural concerns. It may be worth noting that the NGO's occasionally organise trips internally within the country – as well as externally to these afflicted areas in a desire to contribute their efforts to the recovery.

One of the elements that may need addressing in relation to the emergency relief projects is that of cost. While relief from the results of tsunamis and earthquakes is very expensive, many people who have much needed skills have the desire to help, but not the financial means. There are many students in various stages of education who feel that they have skills that could contribute to the relief effort, and significantly reduce the duration of the crisis - but are unable to assist due to financial constraints. In a further informal discussion with an industry observer, Steve mentioned:

*I would be more than happy to head out to these [natural disaster] places. Because of my experience in the military, the leadership skills gained there, and other crisis management training, I feel that I would be a boon to a relief effort; I just cannot afford the plane flight! I mean, I could manage to swing enough to cover my rent for a month or so while I am gone - but that, **and** plane flight, **and** accommodation? No way!*

This clearly shows that some individuals express the motives to travel mentioned in this thesis, but are restricted from participating because of financial constraints. An important consideration regarding destination choice in voluntourism is cost. During the above discussion, the notion that developing countries have, in general, more affordable living expenses, was often mentioned. Sara argued that, as a graduate from the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, she found that volunteering in South East Asia was much more attractive because of how inexpensive the living costs were. She

estimated that these living costs would be no more than \$10 a day - and food rarely exceeds \$4-5 per day. These prices make a month's volunteering much more accessible to interested individuals.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

This thesis examines the motivations for participation in the Eden Valley volunteering project co-ordinated by GCN. It also demonstrates the necessity for further research which links voluntourism to cultural and socio-cultural sustainability, as there seems to be a general dearth of understanding about the impact of this new form of tourism on the host/guest relationship.

The main question for this study was: *What motivates volunteers to participate in volunteering trips into The Eden Valley Reserve?* And based on the research conducted thus far, this study responds: **seeking authenticity, community development, the search for unique experiences, predilection for cultural keenness, and catharsis together shape the motivations of tourists seeking volunteering through travel.** Further analysis of the data provided by this study notes that voluntourism *does* contribute to socio-cultural sustainability.

Recently, voluntourism has been described as a new form of ‘alternative tourism’ as *distinct* from ‘mass tourism’; a re-designation that has worsened the schism between *developed countries as guests*, and *developing countries as destinations*; naturally, what results is an elevation of the idea of ‘us’ and ‘them’ (*The Others*).

Throughout the observation and interviews, the study sought to focus its data collection on three distinct groups: the local community, the voluntourists, and the sending organisation.

This study was also concerned with exploring the socio-cultural sustainability of voluntourism. Through an investigation of a voluntourism project undertaken in the First Nations reserve of Eden Valley in Alberta, the research presented here considered the

definition of voluntourism, the nature of voluntourism as an alternative form of tourism, the experiences of voluntourists, the cultural preservation and promotion dimensions of the industry, and voluntourism in an indigenous community environment.

In our present global climate, there is a pressing need to find solutions to the troubles faced by a global community. If we naively view voluntourism as a simple solution to resolve the challenges facing developing countries, we will be disappointed. Voluntourism is not a magical solution, but is instead, a band-aid accompanied by significant concerns. Voluntourism, can however, serve as a bridge, but it is not a bridge between poverty and poverty alleviation. Instead, it provides a bridge between self-interested travellers, and travellers who genuinely consider the needs of others in a truly humanitarian way. In this sense, voluntourism allows participants to become more profoundly aware of countries, where conditions are desperately unlike those in the developed countries, and devote their time and skills in a way which may eventually unite the developed with the developing.

Another thought is related to Sara, who had experienced teaching children in Cambodia. Although it should be noted that Sara was travelling on her own with guidance from an NGO (New Futures Organisation - NFO) in England, the NFO is very small, and operates mostly from local destinations. Interestingly, this NGO seems to provide an even less intrusive presence, and a greater cultural sustainability than that provided by GCN for instance. This is accomplished primarily due to the small size of NFO, but also because the founder of the company lives, works, and primarily operates from areas in Cambodia. Thus, much of the profits (if any are made) remain within the host community.

It is this researcher's opinion, that it ought to be noted that there may be a space for these types of small scale trips in the developed world (such as Canada) which often include pockets of cultural groups (like those First Nations of the Eden Valley) who experience a very different 'developed', than do the majority of developed world.

Major Findings

The results demonstrate the voluntourist motivations and the socio-cultural sustainability of voluntourism trips in Eden Valley. They were derived from examination and analysis of the both qualitative and quantitative data. These data, demonstrated that voluntourism has a better positive socio-cultural impact on targeted communities than mass tourism, and moreover, it exposed the primary motivations of voluntourists

Firstly, this study responds to the core question what are the foremost motivations of voluntourists that drive them to travel to certain destinations. The search for 'authenticity' appears as a central motive for voluntourists. This paper discussed the concept of authenticity extensively. It was noted that authenticity is the search for the '*real*' or '*genuine*'. Voluntourists select trips that target indigenous communities in order to discover, learn, and integrate with authentic cultures. In this study, 'perceived authenticity' exists in three flavours: constructive, objective and existential. In apposition is 'real authenticity' which describes a contemporaneous and real-world description of events in a culture. It seems clear from the evidence that other voluntourist motivations also emerged from those volunteering trips such as the endorsement of cultural concerns and cultural preservation.

A further element that arises from the study identifies how voluntourism provides the opportunity to learn about a new culture; the volunteering trips in the Eden Valley

permitted the conduct of cultural awareness sessions and promoted cross-cultural communication (as seen in the local cooking event). Being able to immerse themselves in a culture directly responds to the desire of a voluntourist to experience a culture in a genuine way, and thus is related to their motivations.

Very closely related to the motivation to travel is a second finding, which details a general interest in cross-cultural communication whilst travelling to volunteer in indigenous community destinations. It appears from observations and interviews, that voluntourists, in their pre-trip research, were paying attention to which destinations included indigenous cultures, and which did not. Frequently, they chose to travel where indigenous groups exist, specifically to learn about these cultures, and help in preserving and promoting these cultures.

Another finding concludes that previous GCN's voluntourism projects in Eden Valley were ultimately successful, in part, due to the fact that the sending organisation was invited by the local community through their administration representative (though not directly by the community), and because the organisation had made some effort to co-operate with the reserve's administration. That is to say, those projects were properly managed (to a relative degree), and led to a reasonable level of interaction between the host and the guest. Nevertheless, the study notes that additional effort could have been made in regards to the level of participant integration in projects that would increase the opportunity for cultural preservation and promotion. Contrarily, less properly managed voluntourism activities negatively affect the socio-cultural sustainability – in that unplanned trips which create a lack of communication with local communities may

significantly detract from the project's achievements, and in the long term, lead to less sustainable cultural development.

The fifth finding related to the increased level of female awareness of the voluntourism industry. Women increased the awareness of voluntourism as an alternative to traditional mass tourism, and led to transformations in their family vacation arrangements. A marketing ploy which has recently focused on a female interest in voluntourism is partially responsible for the recent increase in voluntourism projects, and consequently, a vast increase in the number of voluntourists.

In relation to the above finding, a recurring element found throughout this thesis relates to the concerns about the impact of voluntourism on the target destination. This study recommends that due to the increased popularity of voluntourism, a more sensitive approach from the NGO's in their project planning (with respect to socio-cultural sustainability) should be adopted.

A further element demonstrates how voluntourism organizers, such as GCN, *are specifically* concerned about minimizing the pressure that might threaten the indigenous peoples and their culture. Permitting harm to come to a culture and its traditions is something which voluntourism organizers, as well as anthropologists and scholars, are mindful to limit, and take steps to avoid. It may be noted that the NGO's are interested in cultural preservation, cultural promotion, and cross-cultural communication. In the opinion of this study, volunteer programs most likely do not only provide economic development, often they promote cross-cultural exchange – as demonstrated in the photographs of the Eden Valley project activities.

As voluntourists participate in group-activities, their exposure to the community is greater, than one might witness in mass-tourism, and furthermore, often continues over a greater period of time. This thesis includes photographs depicting such long-term activities as cooking and painting activities, and traditional dancing (though the thesis is sensitive to the distinction between constructed authenticity, and real authenticity). From this, more intense interaction, it naturally follows that there exists a greater opportunity for cultural damage - and with it, a more imminent concern for the cultural sustainability of the visited community. Nevertheless, what may also be noted is that, because of the more intense cultural interaction, a tourist travelling through voluntourism would enjoy a much more vivid experience of the visited culture, than the tourist travelling in a regular manner.

Integral throughout this thesis are the concepts of socio-cultural sustainability and cultural sustainability of the voluntourism phenomenon or '*industry*'. From the data it appears that there may be a potential for volunteering trips to impact the local indigenous people's identity, both positively, (preservation), or negatively (clashes - 'cultural shock'). The preservation element may be found through interactions such as encouraging local dancing, and may cause a cultural-shock through dependence on outside assistance. However, data collected for this study did not demonstrate any significant clashes or cultural shocks, though some political tension – unrelated to the voluntourism project - was noted.

This final notion, in conjunction with the discovery from the end of the eighth finding, leads to a simple but extremely important logical conclusion:

Those tourists who desire a more intimate cultural experience will begin to choose voluntourism over mass tourism because of the motivations and benefits listed above. The increase in the popularity of voluntourism as a travel option will necessarily increase the footprint of voluntourists on a host culture; the resulting side effect of this increase will be greater cultural pollution, and a significant decrease in cultural sustainability.

This study, therefore, recommends that protocols ought to be created which guide and structure the NGOs, and prevent the industry from randomly developing in the manner of mass tourism. It is important that, because of the immediacy of the interaction between the host and the participant, as well as the sensitive nature of designations visited, some orchestration must be introduced to limit, and even *reduce*, the impairment of cultural sustainability that might occur.

Nevertheless, this study, concurs with Marsh (2007), who points out that voluntourism may be used to sustain and promote socio-cultural objectives to meet the host and guest expectations and needs. It is also indicated by this study that the cultural dimension, which is separate to the socio-cultural dimension, contributes to voluntourism's sustainability. Likewise, McGehee & Santos (2005) found in their study, that voluntourists were, in fact, more likely to pursue activism in support of the visited community following the end of their tour - indicating the socio-cultural impact of voluntourism.

Through many interviews with the three different groups of interviewees, the researcher's perception of the events at Eden Valley was that almost all of the

interviewees considered the GCN project to be relatively successful. However, it ought to be noted that a major flaw in the success of the project lay in both the lack of awareness of the host community members about the project, and a general lack of participation from them. One reason for this was, as previously mentioned, a reduced level of communication among the NGO, the administration of the reserve, and the community members. This impediment to communication between the participants and the community members was expressed as diffidence from the host community. In this regard, more careful project organization might address the community hesitancy that may eventually lead to a much less strained relationship between host and visitor.

Consequently, voluntourism trips to more exotic locations must become even more aware of the potential for this tentative relationship, as cultural differences, and the miscommunications that stem from language barriers, may compound the problem, and reduce the success of the voluntourism project, and thus jeopardize the cultural sustainability of that destination.

Voluntourism offers tourists, NGOs, and host communities an alternative experience of ‘authenticity based destinations’. Such a relation should assess destinations more in terms of cultural preservation and social development. The goal of sustainable tourism is to allow the destination sites to grow and develop by promoting their cultural resources without, at the same time, being negatively impacted by visitors from ‘outside’. However, without sufficient consideration of primary factors, and careful destination resources management, voluntourism may lead to less sustainable tourism development.

A further concern demonstrated by this finding, is whether or not the host community may become dependent upon external interventions. While the projects at

Eden Valley do not focus on construction, other voluntourism projects do. This heavyweight assistance from voluntourism projects may, in time, become the 'normative' state of these communities - who may, without constant support, become dependent upon them due to an increased infrastructure developed by an external mechanism. Moreover, this study is concerned that long term intervention may also restrict, or block opportunities for local craftsmen who may have ordinarily attended to any construction in that area.

Limitations of the Study

In response to an oft-presented criticism of the qualitative method, the most significant limitation of this study was the restricted nature of the project site, and the similarity to a normative Western culture. Because this study was completed within a non-Western community, within a Western community, it may be unrepresentative of voluntourism projects undertaken in significantly different nations; and it may therefore, be inaccurate in its conclusions regarding projects completed in two vastly different cultures.

Due to an internal conflict, the volunteering project for 2011 was suddenly and unexpectedly cancelled. This meant that an important element of this study - that of the researcher participation in the project – could not be completed. This, consequently, meant that a more first-hand experience was not possible and, instead, this study leaned heavily on the interviews conducted after the project. One significant downside to this is the possibility for psychological 'colouring' of the interviewee's memory. Whether an experience was enjoyed, or disliked, alters an individual's recollection of events, and

consequently a researcher needs to be aware of the possibility that a memory of an event may not represent the original event.

A separate, but contributory, factor was the lack of GCN's participant numbers. However, this latter point demonstrates a predilection for voluntourists to travel to more exotic destinations, than volunteer in more temperate and local destinations. As this thesis is charged to investigate the motivations of travel and volunteering, it might be relevant to consider that exotic locations are more 'desirable' than non-exotic locations; a trip to Cambodia would be considerably more appealing than a trip to a native reserve in Alberta, Canada.

One solution to the short nature of the project in Eden Valley (and other similar projects) might be to undertake *pre*, *per*, and *post* project research. The nature of this research would incorporate questions which would more accurately describe and record the nature of motivations, experiences, expectations and the project's sustainability in voluntourism.

Because the researcher was unaware of who was taking part in the project, it was not possible to take pre-project interviews. This meant that the researcher was unable to determine if the participant's goals, or motives had been fully met by the project – as the information retrieved only represented the participant's opinion of whether their goals or motivations had been met or not. Thus, the researcher was again left to attempt to assemble this information from the post-project interviews alone. By combining pre and post project interviews, the researcher would have been able to discern more information with which to respond to the intentions of the study.

The researcher's cultural background is very different from the North American culture. While this means that there was less opportunity for a pre-conceived bias about the Eden Valley community, it also meant that there was a steep learning curve with regards to historical background, language, organisational structure, political boundaries, and intra-Western voluntourism industry.

Closing Thoughts

Fighting poverty, community development, the search for authenticity, and other motivations form the drives for volunteering while travelling, and shape the concept of voluntourism. Can volunteering travel or voluntourism contribute to socio-cultural sustainability? With the research conducted in this field, it is currently very difficult to reasonably respond with an easy answer. Before attempting to provide weighty argumentation one way or the other, further investigations of voluntourism ought to be carried out.

This study also highlights the necessity for further research which explores the link between voluntourism and socio-cultural sustainability. There appears to be a dearth of understanding about the meaning of social and cultural sustainability in voluntourism, and the impact of this alternative form of tourism on the host/guest relationships. It might be argued that, recently, voluntourism is the new form of colonialism – one which has broadened the separation between developed countries ('guest-senders'), and developing countries (hosts); and which promotes an idea of '*Us*' and '*Them*'.

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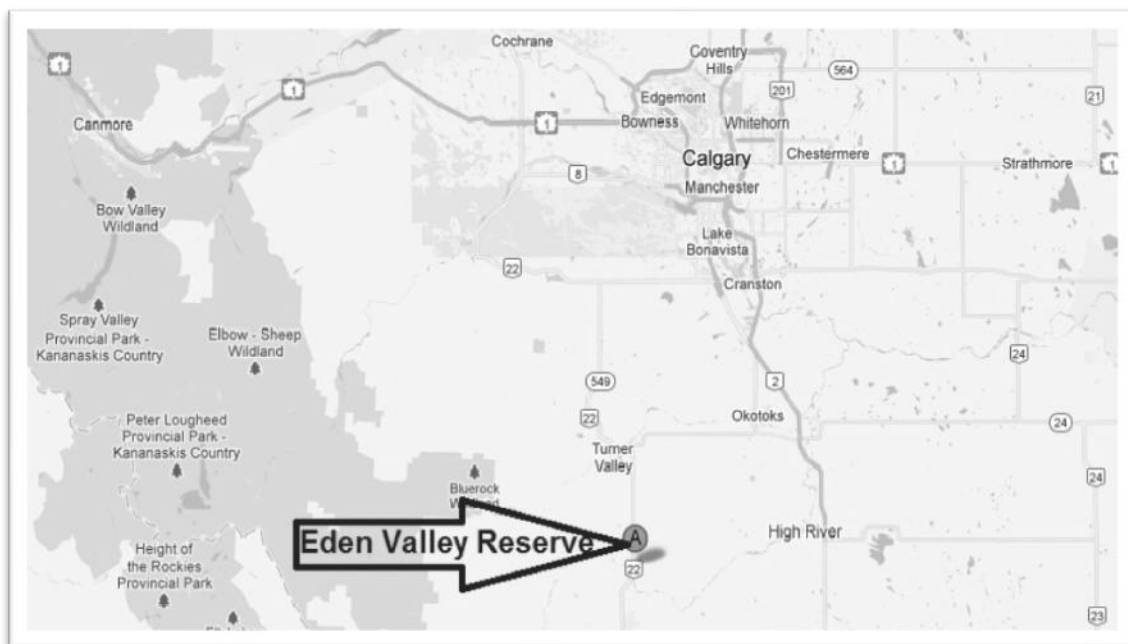
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Appendices

Appendix 1 : Eden Valley Demographic Information (Government of Canada, 2007)

51% of Eden Valley is Males and 49% are females.
The median age of the population was 19.4 years old.
The oldest age group in Eden Valley was 65-69 years, with 10 females identified in this category with no males.
The people under the age 30 counted 315 out of 370, which is 85% of the total population.
The number of women under 30 years old was 120 out of 315.
20 people on the reserve were legally married and not separated.
65 people were recorded as in common law relationships.
9% of the population in Eden Valley who are over the age of 15 years old are legally married and not separated, Compared to 29% for the general native aboriginal population of Alberta.
77% of the population's 'mother tongue' is their aboriginal language.
89% of the population have lived in Eden Valley since 2001.

Appendix 2: Eden Valley Location Map.



Appendix 3: Summary of Interviews

Number of interviews	Group	Approach ²⁴
10 ²⁵	Local community ²⁶ – Eden Valley residents including: <i>I.</i> Members of the local government <i>II.</i> Workers involved in a voluntourism project <i>III.</i> Member of the community who is not involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face interviews • Interviews were recorded (MP3 recorder) • Interviews were transcript into word doc. • Photos has been taken
7	Three groups of Voluntourists: <i>I.</i> Those who participated in Eden Valley's voluntourism <i>II.</i> Previous voluntourists <i>III.</i> Voluntourists from another project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face interviews • Virtual ethnography (online interviews through Skype²⁷) • Interviews are recorded using a software recorder (Call Graph)
6	Global Citizen Network employees <i>I.</i> Representative of the NGO Global Citizens Network main office <i>II.</i> Local representative in the Stoney Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual ethnography (online interviews through Skype) • Interviews are recorded using a software recorder (Call Graph)

²⁴ Audio and visual materials are considered, for some researchers, to be a stand-alone approach and equivalent to interview or observation techniques. However, in this thesis, visual materials (photos) have been included with the interview approach.

²⁵ Two interviewees from Eden Valley community were participating in volunteering projects (voluntourists and members of the local community at the same time) operated by GCN.

²⁶ The fieldwork in this thesis is based on an ethnographic mode of inquiry which focuses on both: society and individuals. Furthermore, the researcher made sure to include Eden Valley's people (especially those whom had participated in previous voluntourism projects), officials and employees in the reserve, local and overseas voluntourists (including Eden Valley voluntourists), and facilitators (sending organisation – GCN).

²⁷ Skype is a 'V.O.I.P.' (visual and voice-over-Internet Protocol) service funded by Niklas Zennström and Janus Friis in 2003, and owned by Microsoft since 2011. For further details see (Wikipedia, 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skype>)

Appendix 4: Sample communication e-mail sent to interviewees.

Dear,

Good day, I am currently a Master's student at the University of Lethbridge. For my study I am trying to explore the socio-cultural aspects of volunteer tourism (voluntourism). The aim of my research is to discover if voluntourism is suitable as a form of Alternative tourism, for social and cultural sustainability.

I am wondering if I can interview you at your convenience in order to add your valuable participation to enhance and shape my study.

I apologise for any inconveniences. Thank you in advance.

Best regards,

Thabit Alomari

Appendix 5: Summary of Interviews (Voluntourists - Eden Valley & Outsiders)

Question	AR	EL	In/out	G	VB	VP	TR	LC
Interviewee								
Sara	20 th	U	OUT	F	YES	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
Jack	20 th	C	OUT	M	YES	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
John	50 th	C	OUT	M	NO	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
Kyla	40 th	U	OUT	F	YES	A+C+H+S	Y	Y
Maya	20 th	U	OUT	F	NO	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
Lori	40 th	H	IN	F	YES	C+H	Y	Y
Sandy	20 th	H	IN	F	NO	C+H	Y	Y
Suzan	50 th	C	OUT	F	YES	A+C+H+S	Y	Y
Mona	20 th	C	IN	F	NO	C+E+H	Y	N
Lean	30 th	U	IN	F	NO	C+E+H	Y	Y
Kim	20 th	H	OUT	F	YES	A+C+E+H	Y	Y
Nancy	30 th	C	OUT	F	YES	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
Adam	50 th	NA	IN	M	NO	C+E+H	Y	Y
Judy	40 th	U	OUT	F	YES	A+C+E+H+S	Y	Y
Luisa	20 th	H	OUT	F	NO	A+C+E+H	Y	Y
Vivian	50 th	NA	IN	F	NO	C+E+H	Y	N
Steve	30 th	NA	IN	M	NO	C+E+H	Y	Y

AR Age range: 15 -29=20th, 30-39=30th, 40-49=40th, 50-69=60th

EL Education level: U=university, C=College, H=High school NA=Not available

In/out Insider or outsider: In = insider, Out=outsider

G Gender- M=Male, F=Female.

VB Volunteered before: Yes or No

VP Volunteering Purpose (motivations): **A**=search for authenticity, **C**=cultural concerns, **E** experience, **H**=help, **S**=self healing

TR Trip repeats. Yes or NO

LC Learn about new culture: Yes or NO

Appendix 6: List of Interviews Questions.

1) For the local community: (List A & B)

- a. Members of the local community (Stoney Nation)
- b. Community administrative and officials in the reserve

2) For Global Citizens Network – sending organization staff: (List C)

- a. Representative of the NGO Global Citizens Network main office
- b. Local representative in the Stoney Nation

3) For voluntourists: (List D)

- a. Someone currently involved in a project on the Stoney Nation
- b. Previous voluntourists
- c. Voluntourists from another project?

Open-ended questions for qualitative interviews will be conducted to consider the effects of the voluntourism project on perceptions of cultural stability and values. Key questions will include the following:

(List A) With the local community (Stoney Nation):

- i. Do you live in Eden Valley permanently?
- ii. Are you from the Stoney Nation?
- iii. How old are you?
- iv. Do you live by yourself or with a family?
- v. Do you have any social problems? Including unemployment, poverty, drugs...
- vi. What do you know about voluntourism? And how do you define it?
- vii. Did you hear about voluntourism activities in the reserve?

- viii. If yes did you meet with any of those voluntourists?
- ix. What are their main activities you have seen?
- x. Do you like your culture and do you want to keep it?
- xi. What do you do to keep your culture? And is that enough?
- xii. Do you think that other people would help in preserving your culture?
And how?
- xiii. Did you receive any direct benefits from the volunteering activities in
Eden Valley?
- xiv. What are the benefits you had from voluntourists?
- xv. Do you like to see voluntourists coming to your community?
- xvi. How will your culture benefit from voluntourism or volunteering
trips?
- xvii. Do you think these trips will preserve and promote your culture? If
yes, how is that?
- xviii. Have you interacted with voluntourist in your community (reserve)?
- xix. What other activities would you like to see, in the future, related to
voluntourists actions?
- xx. Do you have any comment you like to add?

(List B)With community administrative and officials in the reserve:

- i. What is you relation with the voluntourism projects in the reserve?
- ii. Is this your first time in such a project? If not, how many then?
- iii. How do you define these projects?

- iv. Do you see any benefit from these projects to the local people?
Explain.
- v. Do you get involved in directing voluntourists toward certain activity?
- vi. Do you see any challenges facing these projects?
- vii. Are voluntourists activities pre-planned and do you have a direct relation in this planning?
- viii. What are the main activities that voluntourists do in the reserve?
- ix. What is the percentage of the culture-related activities that voluntourists do?
- x. How do you see these activities developing the reserve community?
- xi. How will the local culture benefit from voluntourism or volunteering trips?
- xii. Do you think these trips will preserve and promote the local culture?
If yes, how is that?
- xiii. Have you interacted with voluntourists participants during their visit?
- xiv. What other activities, you suggest, might be beneficial for cultural preservation and promotion?
- xv. Do you have any comment you like to add?

(List C)With Global Citizens Network – sending organization staff:

- i. How old is the organization?
- ii. What was the purpose of starting this organization? Include vision and mission.
- iii. Where are you based? Headquartered? Any other branches?

- iv. How many employees operate this organization?
- v. What are your main volunteering programs?
- vi. How do you define voluntourism?
- vii. Why do you send volunteers to indigenous communities?
- viii. How many voluntourists do you send yearly to Eden Valley?
- ix. How many indigenous people do you serve yearly in Eden Valley?
- x. In which way do you think you contribute in community development?
- xi. Do you carry any cultural activities throughout your programs? If yes,
- xii. What are these activities? Do you have examples?
- xiii. Do you intend to help individuals or groups in your programs?
- xiv. Do you focus more on voluntourists or destination participants in related to cultural communication, preservation, and promotion?
- xv. How do you employ the funds collected from voluntourists?
- xvi. What are the physical achievements of your voluntourists in Eden Valley?
- xvii. Do you intend to promote the indigenous culture? And how?
- xviii. Is the main purpose behind your programmes in Eden Valley a cultural factor?
- xix. What did you learn from previous trips in Eden Valley?
- xx. Would you like to add any other thing?

(List D) With voluntourists:

- i. What is your highest level of education?
- ii. What is your age range?

- iii. Where did you come from?
- iv. What is your current occupation?
- v. How would you define a voluntourism?
- vi. Have you done voluntourism work in the past?
- vii. When you did that?
- viii. Did you volunteer through an organisation?
- ix. How long did you do this?
- x. Where did you volunteer?
- xi. What type of volunteer work were you doing there?
- xii. Did you get paid to do this work in any way, including a stipend?
- xiii. How much money did you pay for your volunteering trip?
- xiv. Did you give all the money to the NGO? Please explain.
- xv. Do you know if the money you paid goes to the destination community?
- xvi. Do you think voluntourism helps in developing communities? And how?
- xvii. Do you think that voluntourists contribute to cultural preservation?
- xviii. Do you think that voluntourists help in promoting the local culture?
- xix. What kind of cultural activities did you learn during your trip?
- xx. What do you know about the culture of Stoney?
- xxi. Can you tell me more about the traditions of Stoney?
- xxii. Are you participating in these trips to learn about the Stoney culture?
If yes, what do you want to know and why?

- xxiii. Did you find any interesting cultural elements? What are they?
- xxiv. Did you feel that Eden Valley local residents wanted to share their culture with you?
- xxv. Can you tell me your impression about the Stoney culture and is it close to your expectations before the trip?

Appendix 7: Letter of Consent

Dear participant:

Volunteer tourists are those travellers who have worked throughout their trips with local people in Eden Valley reserve. You are being asked to participate in a study about tourist's volunteering in Eden Valley. Specifically, you will be asked about the role of these volunteering projects in enhancing your experiences as a traveller, developing your society as a community member and supporting your mission as a Global Citizen Network's member. The purpose of this study is to discover if "volunteer tourism" helps in achieving a better level of social sustainability.

You are invited to participate in an interview because we believe you are able to provide us with a holistic view of volunteer tourism pros and cons. We also believe you are able to discuss, from your perspective, the understanding gaps and special requirements of volunteer tourism.

As the session unfolds, you can choose not to answer any question asked. The session should take only forty-five minutes of your time. If you decide to withdraw from the study, simply leave the interview or data collection premises. There are no consequences for not answering a question or withdrawing from the study. Because of the nature of the interview, all data you have shared prior to the time of withdrawal will not remain in the data set.

There are no known physical risks for participating in this study. However, you may sometimes feel emotionally uncomfortable if reflecting on an unpleasant experience. If this happens, simply let the interviewer know at the end of the session, who will then provide you with names and contact information of counselling and/or mental health services available to you. Also, you can contact the researcher supervisor at Dr. Jan Newberry by phone: (403) 329-5121 or email: jan.newberry@uleth.ca.

Your participation in this research is totally voluntary. Although there are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study, you will be providing the researchers with valuable information that will influence how volunteer tourism programs supports local communities needs and characterize better travelling experiences. Also, further future researches for similar voluntourists projects, would benefit from your contribution.

Before starting the session, the researcher will remind you about the confidential nature of the discussion. As well, the researcher will be using other strategies intended to protect your identity. For example, all identifying information like your name will be removed from the transcript and replaced with a pseudonym. Identifying events will be modified in such a way as to protect your identify and the identity of those you work with. All results of the study will be reported in aggregate form. Your name and/or identifying information will not be made public.

Once the tape is transcribed, if any, the tape will be destroyed. All transcripts from the study will be stored in a safe place. Data will be kept for 5 years and destroyed at this time. Only the researcher will have access to the data.

Findings from this study will be presented at conferences and published in relevant tourism journals. The findings will also be discussed with volunteering agencies (sending organizations), local communities' administrators, and others who might share in building better strategies and developed to better support volunteering trips. *If you wish to review the completed project prior to its release to the public, please contact (t.alomari@uleth.ca).*

If you require any information about this study, or would like to speak to the Principle Investigator, please contact: (*Thabit Alomari*, by phone: 1 403 332 4330 or via email: t.alomari@uleth.ca at the University of Lethbridge. Questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Office of Research Services, University of Lethbridge (phone: 403-329-2747 or email: research.services@uleth.ca

I have read (or have been read) the above information regarding a study about volunteer tourism and its contribution to socio-cultural sustainability.

_____ (Printed Name)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)