

Foundations of Inclusive Marketing

This resource supports British Columbia's tourism industry partners, businesses, and operators in applying inclusive approaches to marketing — including campaigns, social content, web copy, itineraries, and storytelling about the places and experiences that make this province so special.

Understanding Representation in Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing has often centered certain travellers and presented their experiences as “normal,” while others have been excluded, overlooked, or misrepresented. These patterns influence which travellers see themselves reflected in marketing, which experiences feel “for them,” and which destinations feel welcoming.

Overrepresented travellers and perspectives often include those who are:

- Higher-income or luxury travellers
- Non-disabled / able-bodied
- Solo travellers or couples without caregiving responsibilities
- Straight and cisgender
- White
- Younger or middle-aged adults

Underrepresented travellers and perspectives often include those who are:

- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
- Budget-conscious or lower-income travellers
- Caregivers, parents, and those travelling with dependents
- Disabled or a Person with a Disability

- Older adults and multi-generational families
- People with diverse body sizes, cultural backgrounds, or religious practices

How communities are represented is just as important as how travellers are represented. Communities are often:

- Framed as places to “discover” or “adventure” in, without acknowledging Indigenous Nations and local communities
- Described in generalized or simplified ways that flatten cultural, social, and regional differences
- Positioned as invisible, or as something for visitors to consume, rather than as people with agency, authority, and knowledge
- Represented through outdated narratives, stereotypes, or historical-only perspectives, rather than as diverse and current
- Shown as destinations, backdrops, or experiences, rather than places where people live and work

These patterns shape what is considered normal or expected in travel. Being aware of this context supports more intentional choices about whose stories are told, how experiences are represented, and who feels invited, reflected, and considered.

Overarching Principles

Planning and reviewing material through principled guidelines can support more inclusive marketing. Below are some high-level inclusive principles (and some examples of non-inclusive approaches). These are not rigid rules. Inclusion depends on context, relationships, and intent paired with impact.

Inclusive Principle	Non-Inclusive Approach
Engage real people to tell their own stories in their own words	Speak on behalf of communities or rely only on external or secondhand perspectives
Use “deep” versus “wide” approaches (focus on one authentic story or lived experience)	Try to signal inclusion by showing many diverse identities at a surface level
Be specific and intentional in who you aim to include (e.g., community, culture, intersection, lived experience)	Generalize, homogenize, or treat identities as interchangeable
Build relationships and involve people early and meaningfully	Engage contributors or community partners in an extractive way, only at the end, or as a one-time checkbox
Use plain, accessible, and inclusive language	Use jargon, idioms, or language that excludes or assumes understanding
Reflect on impact: consider how content will or may be received, consider possible risks and harms, and take a harm reduction approach	Focus on intent only or assume positive impact
Choose visuals that reflect real lived experiences and diversity	Default to stock imagery or staged, performative representation
Ask, “why?” at every stage (Why this story? Why this voice? Why this moment? Why this choice?)	Default to dominant narratives or perspectives

Considering Scale, Context, and Relationships

The rest of this document includes specific recommended practices and things to avoid. These guidelines are meant to support thoughtful decision-making, not to imply a single “right” approach. Please apply the recommendations in ways that reflect the scale, contexts, and relationships involved in your work.

Applying Principles: Making Reflections Actionable

Intentionality supports inclusion. Reflection, rather than fixed rules, is often the best way to support an inclusive approach. Use the questions that are most relevant to the scale, context, and complexity of your project — especially when developing new stories, representing communities, or navigating sensitive contexts.

As you review your marketing, consider the following questions. You may notice that many of the recommended examples reflect multiple recommended practices, and this is intentional. One inclusive choice in marketing often creates a broader inclusive impact.

Reflection 1: What biases do I bring to this work? What assumptions am I making?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pause to identify whose preferences, travel styles, and perspectives are shaping decisions. 2. Sense-check ideas with people who have different lived experiences than your own. (Ensure this is not tokenizing. For example, offer open or low-pressure opportunities for input rather than assuming someone will want to advise based on their identity.) 3. Question default language, imagery, and narratives that reflect one dominant way of travelling. 4. Reflect on how your own role, identity, and context (e.g., urban, able-bodied, full-time marketer, frequent traveller) shape what feels “normal” or “aspirational.” 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assuming everyone travels freely, comfortably, or wants the same kinds of experiences you enjoy (e.g., rugged, adventure, nightlife, or luxury travel), without barriers related to cost, ability, culture, or social context. 2. Treating your own perspective as neutral or universal, and defaulting to dominant travel narratives without questioning who they exclude (e.g., independence, spontaneity, or high mobility). 3. Assuming rural or remote communities are primarily “scenic backdrops” rather than places where people live and work. 4. Assuming Indigenous culture is primarily historical, rather than contemporary and evolving. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A destination marketing team partners with a local content creator with accessibility needs to review existing content and co-create new materials. The resulting content highlights accessible routes, transportation options, and lived experiences navigating the destination, offering practical and relevant insights for travellers with similar needs.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A campaign promotes “freedom” and “escape” through rugged, remote experiences that assume physical ability, access to transportation, and flexible time and income, without acknowledging barriers or offering alternative ways to experience the destination.</p>

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Reflection 2: Who is this for? Who might feel left out?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clearly define the intended audience, and be transparent about who the content is (and isn't) designed for. 2. Look for opportunities to broaden relevance in simple, practical ways (e.g., including accessibility details, cost ranges, seasonal context, or different travel styles). 3. Review content from multiple perspectives, considering different ways of travelling and potential barriers (e.g., financial, physical, cultural, logistical). 4. Balance visitor appeal with respect for the people and communities who live in and steward the destination. 5. Consider how the same space or experience may be used differently by visitors and local communities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating content primarily for already overrepresented travellers (e.g., young, able-bodied, white, straight, higher-income travellers), without considering who is excluded. 2. Highlighting only high-cost, physically demanding, or time-intensive experiences. 3. Assuming one "ideal traveller" and building all content around that perspective. 4. Leaving out practical details that help people assess whether an experience is accessible or relevant to them. 5. Prioritizing visitor experience in ways that overlook or minimize local community presence, needs, or use of the same spaces. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A destination guide includes multiple itinerary options that reflect different budgets, mobility levels, and travel styles (e.g., self-guided, family-friendly, slower-paced). It includes practical details such as cost ranges, accessibility features, and seasonal considerations, helping a wider range of travellers determine what works for them.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A regional itinerary highlights only high-end dining, luxury accommodations, and physically demanding outdoor activities. It primarily features young, able-bodied travellers and does not include information about accessibility, cost, or alternative ways to experience the destination.</p>

Reflection 3: Whose voice or perspective is included, and how authentic is it? And who shaped the story?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Centre people’s own perspectives and lived experience in stories, using direct quotes and attribution rather than relying on internal or marketing interpretation. 2. Name specific communities, Nations, creators, guides, and operators, rather than referring to groups in general terms. 3. Engage people with lived experience throughout the process (e.g., ideation, development, review), not just at the end. 4. Where possible, invite contributors to describe themselves in their own words (e.g., name, pronouns, community) and use that language rather than assigning descriptors. 5. Confirm that representations feel accurate, respectful, and reflective of present-day realities to contributors before publishing, rather than relying on outdated or assumed narratives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Writing about communities without their involvement, input, or consent. 2. Paraphrasing or replacing people’s words with generic marketing language. 3. Referring to Nations or local communities in broad or vague terms without naming who is actually involved. 4. Including communities, Nations, or contributors after key decisions have already been made. 5. Assigning labels, identities, or descriptors to people without their input. 6. Relying on stock imagery or assumptions to shape the story, rather than real people and relationships. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A tourism organization collaborates with a local Indigenous guide and a newcomer-owned business to co-create a story. Each contributor is named and invited to share how they would like to be described (e.g., name, role, community connection). The final content includes direct quotes from each person, reflects their perspectives in their own words, and is reviewed and approved by them before publication.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A blog post describes “local culture” or “Indigenous traditions” without naming specific Nations, communities, or individuals. The content is written entirely by an internal team or external agency, using generalized language and without input, consent, or review from the people represented.</p>

Reflection 4: Does this feel specific and real, or broad and generalized?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be precise about place, people, and experiences, rather than relying on vague or generic descriptors. 2. Highlight the diversity within communities, places, and cultures, rather than presenting them as uniform. 3. Replace broad phrases with concrete details that help audiences understand context (e.g., who, where, what, and why it matters). 4. Focus on one thoughtful, well-developed example or story, rather than many surface-level signals of inclusion. 5. Include everyday realities and lived experiences, not only idealized moments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using vague or generalizing phrases (e.g., “hidden gem,” “authentic culture,” “something for everyone”). 2. Describing entire regions, communities, or cultures as if they are homogeneous. 3. Avoiding specificity in an effort to keep content broadly appealing. 4. Relying on generalized or aspirational language without explaining what the experience actually involves. 5. Overloading content with multiple places, people, or identities without depth or context. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>Content features a locally owned café run by a Filipino Canadian owner, who shares how their menu reflects both their cultural background and the surrounding community. The story includes their name, perspective, and specific details about the space, the neighbourhood, and what makes it meaningful to them and their customers.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>Content invites visitors to explore a “vibrant and diverse local community” with “authentic cultural experiences,” without naming specific people, places, or perspectives, or explaining what those experiences actually are.</p>

Reflection 5: Does this feel authentic and respectful to the people represented?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use language and imagery that reflect how people and communities describe themselves. 2. Involve people with lived experience to add depth, nuance, and context to storytelling. 3. Prioritize accuracy and respect over broad marketability or appeal. 4. Consider how the content may feel to someone from the community represented, or to someone who shares similar lived experiences. 5. Seek feedback on impact (not just intent), and be open to making changes based on that feedback. 6. Reflect on whether the content represents a reciprocal or respectful relationship, rather than a one-sided portrayal. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trying to signal inclusion without meaningful relationships, input, or understanding. 2. Romanticizing, simplifying, or misrepresenting culture for marketing appeal. 3. Treating people, identities, or cultural elements as interchangeable or symbolic. 4. Assuming that content will be received the same way by all audiences. 5. Prioritizing what is “marketable” over what is accurate or respectful. 6. Assuming content is inclusive because the intent behind it is positive. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A piece of content features an Indigenous tour experience and includes the guide’s name, Nation, and perspective in their own words. The story reflects the purpose and meaning of the experience from the guide’s point of view and has been reviewed to ensure it feels accurate and respectful to those involved.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A campaign uses imagery and language referencing “ancient traditions” or “timeless culture” to create appeal, without context, specificity, or input from the people represented, reducing culture to an aesthetic or marketing theme.</p>

Reflection 6: Are people represented with agency and context?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show people leading, creating, hosting, guiding, or shaping experiences (not just appearing in them). 2. Provide context about who people are, their role, and why the experience matters to them. 3. Reflect people as knowledgeable, skilled, and connected to place, rather than passive participants. 4. Use storytelling (captions, copy, quotes) to connect people to purpose, place, and relationships. Don't rely on visuals alone. 5. Consider how different people are positioned in relation to each other (e.g., who is guiding, who is learning, who is centered). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using people as background, decoration, or atmosphere without context. 2. Showing people from underrepresented groups primarily as participants, while others are positioned as leaders or experts. 3. Including people in visuals without explaining who they are or their connection to the experience. 4. Cropping, framing, or selecting images in ways that minimize someone's presence, role, or contribution. 5. Relying on visuals alone to communicate inclusion, without supporting context in the accompanying content. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>Content features two older travellers who are friends with mobility needs, planning and leading their own experience. They are shown making decisions about pacing, transportation, and activities, and engaging meaningfully with the destination. The content includes their perspective in their own words, along with specific details about accessibility (e.g., step-free routes, rest areas, transportation options), positioning them as knowledgeable about what works for them.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A scenic photo includes people from underrepresented groups in the background, out of focus, or not engaged in any visible activity. No context is provided about who they are, their role, or their connection to the place, and the focus remains on the landscape or the visitor experience.</p>

Reflection 7: Could this unintentionally reinforce a stereotype or a power dynamic (a situation where some are represented as better than others)?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review language and imagery for common tourism tropes (e.g., “untouched,” “hidden,” “discovered”) and question what they imply. 2. Consider stereotypes that may be specific to the people, communities, or identities represented in the content. 3. Reflect on who is positioned as the expert, the authority, the host, the learner, or the beneficiary, and how. 4. Consider whose knowledge, presence, and contributions are visible, and whose are minimized or absent. 5. Test content with partners or collaborators to identify unintended stereotypes or harmful framing. 6. Use framing that recognizes local Indigenous and community leadership, stewardship, and lived experience. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using language that implies a place is empty, undiscovered, or uninhabited. 2. Reinforcing stereotypes through imagery or roles (e.g., who is shown as active vs. passive, knowledgeable vs. observing). 3. Defaulting to narratives where visitors are shown as explorers, adventurers, or discoverers. 4. Positioning some groups primarily as service providers or background figures, while others are shown as the primary experiencers. 5. Assuming content is free of stereotypes because the intent behind it is positive. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>Content follows a multi-generational family travelling together, showing how different family members shape the experience (e.g., elders influencing pacing and storytelling, caregivers planning logistics, younger members engaging in activities). The story reflects shared decision-making and highlights how the experience is meaningful across ages, rather than centring one “ideal” traveller.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>Language describes a destination as “undiscovered,” “untouched,” or “off the beaten path,” framing visitors as explorers or adventurers while failing to acknowledge the Nations and communities who live there and have long-standing relationships with the place and what those relationships are (e.g. Indigenous Nations as stewards).</p>

Reflection 8: Who will see this and feel like they belong here? Who might see this and feel like they don't?

Recommended Practices	Things to Avoid	Example
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include clear signals of welcome, safety, and accessibility where relevant (e.g., physical access, affordability, cultural context). 2. Provide practical details that help people determine whether an experience is right for them (e.g., cost, pace, environment, amenities). 3. Reflect a range of identities, bodies, relationships, and ways of travelling across content over time (not just in a single piece). 4. Consider emotional as well as physical belonging, including who feels comfortable, safe, and respected in the experience being presented. 5. Think beyond who is attracted to the destination, and consider who feels seen, respected, and considered in the content. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assuming that representation alone creates a sense of belonging. 2. Using vague or generic statements of inclusion (e.g., “everyone is welcome”) without supporting details. 3. Omitting information that may be essential for someone to feel safe or prepared (e.g., accessibility, cost, cultural considerations). 4. Presenting a narrow version of who “fits” in a space through repeated imagery or storytelling. 5. Focusing only on attracting visitors, without considering how content may signal exclusion or discomfort to some audiences. 	<p>More Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A destination page includes imagery and stories that reflect different types of travellers (e.g., solo travellers, families, older adults), alongside practical details such as accessibility features, cost ranges, and what to expect in different seasons. The content helps people assess not just whether they want to visit, but whether they would feel comfortable and supported if they do.</p> <p>Less Inclusive Example:</p> <p>A campaign features a narrow range of travellers (e.g., young, able-bodied couples) and uses general language like “there’s something for everyone,” without providing details about accessibility, cost, or different ways to experience the destination.</p>

Language-Specific Examples

Less Inclusive	More Inclusive
<p>“Explore hidden gems off the beaten path” (uses idioms and ignores local presence)</p>	<p>“Explore new-to-you places, and get to know the Nations and communities who already call them home”</p>
<p>“Experience authentic Indigenous culture” (flattens and homogenizes culture)</p>	<p>“Learn from [Nation/community name] through guided experiences led by local knowledge-keepers” (specificity reflects respect and lived experience expertise)</p>
<p>“Accessible for everyone”, “fun for everyone” (assumes accessibility or experience)</p>	<p>“Wheelchair-accessible trails, step-free pathways, and accessible seating areas are available.” (specific details support informed choices)</p>
<p>“Perfect for families” (defines experience by narrow identity)</p>	<p>“Welcoming for families, caregivers, travel companions, and groups of all kinds” (avoids narrow assumptions about roles or structures)</p>

Visual-Specific Examples

Less Inclusive	More Inclusive
People from underrepresented groups are excluded from visuals	A range of identities is reflected across content over time (not only in a single post or campaign)
Relying on visual diversity to signal inclusion	Pairing diverse imagery with intentional, meaningful context in accompanying copy (e.g., naming people, sharing their role or perspective, including relevant details about their experience)
People from underrepresented groups are shown in the background, out of focus, or in positions that suggest less autonomy or leadership	People from underrepresented groups are shown leading, creating, guiding, or actively participating in meaningful ways
People from underrepresented groups are included only in group settings to signal diversity	Individuals or groups are featured in ways that that consider nuance and depth; content reflects who they are, what they do, and why it matters, and the story is prioritized over optics
Visuals look staged, overly polished, or disconnected from real experiences	Visuals feel natural and grounded, reflecting real people, places, and interactions (with attention to local relevance and authenticity)
Visuals rely on a single visible dimension of diversity (e.g., race or skin tone, Indigenous regalia, a wheelchair) to signal inclusion with no deeper engagement or storytelling	Visuals reflect a range of intersecting identities and experiences (e.g., age, ability, culture, Indigeneity, family structure), over time and are combined with storytelling

Visuals are most effective when they are supported by context. Without thoughtful framing, even diverse imagery can reinforce stereotypes, exclude important perspectives, or feel performative.

Inclusive Marketing is a Journey

Inclusive marketing is an ongoing practice. It's not about getting everything right or applying everything all at once. It's about making thoughtful choices and being open to learning over time. Small shifts, in language, visuals, and approach, can build trust and help more people feel reflected, respected, and welcome.

Complimentary One-on-One Follow Up

If you would like further support, please feel free to [book a complimentary one-on-one session](#) to discuss how you can be more inclusive in your marketing. Or feel free to contact Chantelle (chantelle@andhumanity.ca) if you have any questions.