

# Moccasin Trails

## Video Clip 2: MT Experience

**Q:** Can you describe your product, what you do?

**A:** Yeah. So, Moccasin Trails is really-- It's an Indigenous tourism experience. I don't like to use the word "tour" because, really, it's an experience. And it's founded and principled on education. We know that we're the most stereotyped people in our own country. We know that people are coming to our little region of the Thompson-Okanagan maybe expecting to see Haida Gwaii culture or Coast Salish culture. And so, we feel obligated, and it's a duty for us, to educate our visitors while they spend time with us. And that education really falls in line with our language, our ceremonies, our songs, our stories, our legends, our people. And that's what this whole business is based upon. It's not about profit. We're not focused on chasing the almighty dollar. We're focused on transforming visitors and focused on relationships, knowing that profits will come, but that's secondary for us. We know that if we concentrate on the first part, the other part will come. So, it's an experience where we basically just take you on the ancestral paths of our Indigenous People. We have ancestral trails all over the world, all over Canada, and we need to get back to those trails. And those trails are along the waterways. Those trails are along the earth, hiking trails. Our people would travel numerous, hundreds of kilometres, thousands of kilometres, to visit, to share, to celebrate, to hunt, to go to war, to defend their territory. And they traveled all over for thousands of years. So, there's really these historical ancestral paths that we want to take people back on. And we want them to know that. Anyone can take anyone in a canoe down a river. Anyone can take anyone on a hike wherever you are, but with us it's a lot different. With us it's getting back to that trail. So, if I take you on a trail and we just go for a walk, that's one thing, but if I stop you in the middle of the trail and say, "Okay. Let's recognize where we're at. This trail was traveled thousands of years ago. And the Secwépemc people would use this trail to go hunt the Syilx, the Syilx people, and the

Okanagans. And they would use this trail to hunt, and they would set up camps halfway through this trail." And we would do a ceremony right there to recognize that and honour that. Well, now you're a little bit more connected to that trail, right? And that's what we do because that's what our people did. And so, our vision and our philosophy is really deep rooted into getting back to that. Getting back to the way our ancestors lived thousands of years ago. And the way they traveled thousands of years ago. Every experience we start off with the feeding of the Mother Earth Ceremony. And maybe in the past our visitors would watch us do ceremonies, but we had said, "No. I think we're at that point now where we can have our visitors take part in it." And our Moccasin Trails is really-- We always feel that in order for us to truly educate our visitors, is we have to tap into their five senses. They have to see us. They have to smell it. They have to taste it. They have to hear it. They have to feel it. That's the only way they're really going to walk away from an experience with us just transformed. And so, we start off every tour, every experience with the feeding-- So, if we're in a canoe, we'll do a feeding of the Water Ceremony. We do our safety orientation and all of that, but once we get on the water, we actually stop, stop paddling. And we'll lead the group in a feeding of the Water Ceremony. And what that does, really, is it just sets everyone in this-- It puts everyone in this spiritual place of contentment, of simplicity. And then, we have the rest of the day with you to share our stories and our songs and language. And so, that's really what we do, whether we're on a canoe or whether we're hiking on a trail to Coyote Rock, we want people to really understand who we are and really what makes us tick. Why do you speak your language? Why do you wear that clothing? Why do you eat that food? Why do you sing like that? Why do you dance like that? And all of our visitors have questions, and we're so open to educating. And we always say we need people, not just our people, but everyone to have uncomfortable discussions. And that's the only way we can really learn from each other. And that's what we do. A lot of our visitors really ask a lot of questions, and we want them to. Some of them are-- There's no such thing as a dumb question, so-- But it sparks this conversation. And so, that's what we do. We take people back to the ancestral trails of our people,

whether it's canoe or walking or we jump in a vehicle and we do a three-day tour through the backroads, but it's really just spending time with us. Spending time with us and really talking and learning. We want them to learn from us because we want them to leave with a deeper appreciation and a deeper understanding of Indigenous culture. And that's how we feel is that's how we're going to break down the stereotypes one by one. We're not going to get through to all of them, but you're definitely going to have one or two that leaves an experience with us that maybe may look at the water a little bit differently, or maybe look at their kids a little bit differently, or maybe look at that eagle a little differently now. And we really make them look at life through an Indigenous lens.

Please note that this transcript has been slightly modified; it is not a verbatim copy of the original audio clip.