PACE Research Report

Institution

Vancouver Island University

Principal Researcher

Nichola Evernden

Research Field

Tourism and Economic Development

Student Involvement

1 student employed in Cooperative Education

Partners & Collaborators

Tourism Tofino

Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation

Funding Sources

Tourism Tofino and Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation

Project Location

Tofino and Nanaimo

Student gathers visitor data

Tourism market research by VIU Coop Student

Nichola Evernden, a fourth year Vancouver Island University (VIU) Bachelor of Tourism Management student, is completing a cooperative education work term using her applied research skills. She is working for Tourism Tofino and the Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation to gather data on visitors to improve marketing intelligence in both destinations.

Tourism destinations need to understand their visitors in order to respond appropriately with marketing investments. As there is no system in BC to gather ongoing data, this can be difficult. Destination development experts in Tofino and Nanaimo decided to work together and hire a VIU student with research expertise to design and gather data on their visitors in the summer of 2013. Nichola, an experienced undergraduate researcher, fit their needs perfectly.

Nichola has been approaching visitors and using an online survey system to ask them, once they return home, to provide input on their overall experience. The goal is to develop a system that can continue after the summer so both destinations can continue gathering data to understand their visitors throughout the year.

For Nichola, this experience provided an opportunity to work as a consultant and practice her research skills. "VIU faculty are engaged in a variety of projects and I have been fortunate to work with a number of them," says Nichola. "But this project gave me the opportunity to take more responsibility and produce work for a client in a collaborative approach. I can't wait to see how useful the data are for the specific destinations."