

**Stakeholders' Experiences of an Interpretation Accreditation System:
A Case Study in Banff National Park, Canada**

By

Rosanna L. Maunder

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**Rosanna Maunder
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Abstract

Previous research suggests that guided interpretation in nature-based settings has the potential to develop positive attitudes towards conservation and can foster appropriate visitor behavior in parks and protected areas. However, such goals are unlikely to be achieved without adequately trained personnel. In response, professional associations have been formed and professional accreditation systems have been developed (in countries such as Australia, United States and Canada) in part to enhance the quality assurance for nature-based tour guides. While considerable research has focused on guide effectiveness and roles, there have been few studies that have explored the issues surrounding implementation of accreditation requirements. Using the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) located in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada as a case study the intent of the research has been to discover how a professional association and the concept of accreditation are accepted by a guiding community. By understanding the perceptions of stakeholders (guides, operations owners, Parks Canada, and MPHIA's management) in regards to the accreditation program, this research aimed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the services provided by interpretive guides in the Rocky Mountain National Parks while also contributing to knowledge base in allied fields including: tourism, parks and recreation, outdoor leadership and education. Although overall there was a general acceptance of the need for MPHIA and its programs, by the fourteen stakeholders who were interviewed for this study, some specific criticisms were voiced in regard to the content, and evaluation of its programs, the national and international transferability of its qualifications and its image and credibility. These concerns were manifested in a lack of commitment and involvement among some guides and tourism operators. Given this outcome, there is a need for MPHIA to examine the content and relevance of its programs; to increase links to national and international organizations involved in guiding; and to broaden its scope to encompass a more diverse clientele within the tourism industry in Banff and

beyond. More generally, observations from interviewees suggested that a fruitful area for future research would be the impacts on certification programs of the peripatetic lifestyle of guides, the cost of resort living and the insecurity and seasonal nature of employment in the guiding field.

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List of Acronyms Used

ACC	Alpine Club of Canada
ACMG	Association for Canadian Mountain Guides
BHTC	Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation
BLLTB	Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau
BBVS	Banff Bow Valley Study
BNP	Banff National Park
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
DMC	Destination Management Consultant
FGASA	Field Guide Association of South Africa
FIT	Frequent Independent Traveler
GDS	Gross Dept Service Ratio
HTS	Heritage Tourism Strategy
MPHIA	Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association
NAI	National Association for Interpretation (Canada and the United States)
OTEK	Organisation of Tourism Education and Training (Greece)
PI	Professional Interpreter (based on MPHIA's certification levels)
PPA	Parks and Protected Areas
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

Definition of Terms

Accreditation

To officially recognize, accept or approve someone or something (Cambridge Advanced Learners On-Line Dictionary, 2007). Within the field of tourism and specifically within the tour guiding industry this term is often used interchangeably with the term certification (Black & Weiler, 2005). Both terms are used interchangeably throughout this written report.

Destination Management Consultant (DMC)

Independently hired staff that assist with large tour groups (e.g., corporate groups). Common duties include: assisting with arrivals and departures of guests at airports, working at hospitality desks at hotels providing general information about the area and booking activities and dining reservations, and providing commentary on coaches and leading groups to scenic attractions and activities.

Indeterminate Employee

A Parks Canada an indeterminate employee is one that is hired regularly each year but only works for part of the year. (e.g., summer season).

Interpretation

A mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource (NAI, 2007, ¶ 1).

Nature-Based Tourism

Tourism focused on or in natural areas which may include aspects of the adventure, heritage and ecotourism markets.

Roving Interpretation

A planned and personalized conversation conducted by interpreters with visitors in an informal setting. For example, roving interpreters in a National Park often engage in dialogue with visitors at trail heads and popular scenic attractions. Roving interpretation is designed to reach visitors who might not otherwise receive interpretive messages.

Step-On-Guide

A guide who 'steps on' a tour bus and temporarily takes control of the tour temporarily from the lead tour escort. Step-on guides are often asked to take groups to unfamiliar areas or places that require unique or specialized knowledge that the escort cannot provide.

Tour Guide

A person who guides groups or individual visitors around building, sites, and landscapes and who interprets the cultural and natural heritage of the environment (Black & Ham, 2005).

CHAPTER ONE: A STARTING POINT

1.1. Introduction

The sun is shining as two visitors to the National Park step onto the brightly coloured bus. They are welcomed to the tour by the smiling guide and find a comfortable seat with the hope that they have spent their money wisely and that they will see a grizzly bear or a bull elk on their three hour animal safari tour. The young man waits in front of the information centre, looking down the street in anticipation of his tour to arrive. He has wanted to hike in the Canadian Rockies for some time now, and hiking to see Stanley Glacier sounded like a unique experience in the brochure. The father watches as the guide chooses the appropriate horses that will take him and his children on their afternoon trip. After adjusting everyone's stirrups, the guide stretches her arm and points out an osprey soaring above. The awaited trail ride is set to begin. What each visitor to the park will learn, how much fun they will have, and what they will take away from the experience is yet to be decided.

From an organized bus tour, to hiking on a trail or being guided through the landscape on horseback, an element of a visitor's experience involves the capabilities of their guide. Interpretation- the ability to communicate effectively and to engage any audience – may lie at the heart of a memorable as compared to an ordinary or mediocre tour. In a National Park setting, park managers, private business owners, tourism agencies and visitors all have stakes in effective interpretation. Thus, exploring the methods that have been established to ensure the quality of nature-based interpretive guides is a worthy inquiry.

1.2. Background: Nature-Based Tour Guiding, Interpretation and Certification

There continues to be growth in tourism especially in heritage and nature-based settings (Page & Dowling, 2002) and tour guides continue to have a key role in ensuring that tourism is more destination friendly as they act as a conduit between the visitor and the local community (Pond, 1993). It is at least partially through the tour guide's interpretation that tourists form impressions and understandings of the host culture. However, despite the acknowledged importance of the tour guide, limited empirical studies

have been conducted on the role of the guide in the context of nature-based tourism (e.g., Haig & McIntyre, 2002; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998; Weiler & Davis, 1993). Furthermore, there is very little published research on the evaluation of the training of nature-based tour guides and the methods that have been put in place to assure quality in the industry (Christie & Mason, 2003).

Most recently, Black and Weiler (2005) have looked at methods that are being used in the tour guiding industry for quality assurance and as regulatory mechanism. Codes of conduct, professional associations, awards of excellence, training and professional certification have all been established with varying levels of success. Black and Ham (2005) seem to particularly favour the Australian EcoGuide Certification Program. Their article suggests a general model that may be followed to establish a similar method of quality assurance. However, their article also states that there is a lack of research on guide certification (Black & Ham, 2005, p194). Gaining more understanding on the complexities of developing professional guiding associations and certification programs as a method of quality assurance may help provide additional insight for tourism-based communities as well as the fields of outdoor leadership, recreation, parks and tourism.

Research has not focused in particular on the dynamic relationship between the various stakeholders (e.g., guides, private business owners, park management, and the operational association) in implementing certification in a guiding community. And, as explained by Black and Weiler (2005),

Empirical studies that monitor and actually assess and compare the outcomes and effectiveness of professional associations and professional certification with respect to the tour guiding industry and tour guide performance will be a fruitful avenue for further research. (p. 32)

1.3. Project Purpose and Research Questions

Looking at the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) that is located in Banff National Park, Canada as a descriptive case study, the perceptions of stakeholders of a professional association that offers interpretive guide certification is explored. The intent of this research is to discover how one professional association that has been developed to administer guide training and

guide certification is perceived by participants and stakeholders in a guiding community. To this end the research focused on the following three main questions. First, what is interpretation and what role does it play as a management tool in enhancing positive visitor behaviour in protected park areas? Second, what types of accreditation and certification programs are available in nature-based tourism that are aimed at ensuring a supply of quality tour guides? And finally, what is the experience of stakeholders with an interpretation accreditation system in a nature-based guiding community?

The main purpose of this research is to examine a professional guiding association that offers interpretive guide certification in the nature-based tourism community. More specifically the objectives of this research are:

- To review certification systems for interpretive guides that have been developed in nature-based tourism in park settings
- To explore key stakeholders' perceptions of the MPHIA accreditation system for interpretive guides
- To further develop understanding of professional guiding associations and professional guiding certification

1.4. Structure

In order to accomplish the objectives of this research, this study has three distinct components. The first component, found in Chapter Two, reviews the existing empirical research that has focused on interpretive guiding and quality assurance from the fields of tourism, outdoor leadership, recreation, environmental education, and parks management. Topics that were explored were not limited to, but include: interpretation, interpretation in nature-based settings, the use interpretation as a park management tool, the development of quality assurance mechanisms in interpretation and the guiding industry, and challenges that are associated with nature-based tourism.

The second component involved field research which examined the relationship of stakeholders with an accreditation system for interpretive guides. A qualitative research approach was employed using in-

depth personal interviews with key stakeholders of MPHIA. A thorough reflection of the interviews was reported on. This was achieved by initially examining the perceptions of the individual stakeholders towards MPHIA and followed by the exploration of commonalities and differences that emerged from varying members of the Banff guiding community. The methodology and results of this research are discussed in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

The final component involved the discussion of the results. The main focus of Chapter Five was to further explore the challenges involved in the development, implementation and overall acceptance of an accreditation system and professional guiding association in a nature-based guiding community. This was achieved by expanding the understanding of the interviewees' perceptions through incorporating the broader literature on professional guiding associations and resort communities. As stated in the conclusion, this research aims not only to provide feedback for MPHIA and the guiding community in Banff but also to extend the knowledge base on professional guiding associations and professional guiding certification as methods to enhance quality in the tour guiding industry.

1.5. Personal Interest

Working as an interpretive guide developed a passion within me to engage the audience while promoting messages of environmental stewardship. This passion encouraged me to analyze interpretation through an academic lens to discover what constitutes quality in interpretive guiding in nature-based settings. Exploring the perceptions of an accreditation system through the lived experience of members of a guiding community was one step towards that goal. This study aims to contribute to the further development of all communities of nature-based guides who are providing engaging, educational, and inspiring interpretive programs each and everyday.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1. Introduction

Existing literature on the accreditation of nature-based interpretive guides was conceptualized within four broad categories including:

1. Defining nature-based tourism in the context of this study
2. The examination of interpretation and its use in park management
3. The exploration of methods introduced to assure quality in the tour guiding industry

2.2. Defining Nature-Based Tourism

Mountains everywhere call individuals to visit and enjoy their astonishing grandeur. Whether it is the biotic diversity they support, their beauty, the climatic variety they generate or the activities they provide, tourism is playing an increasing role in how mountainous landscapes throughout the world are utilized. National Parks were first developed in the USA and Canada in mountainous regions and though preservation and romantic notions of safeguarding wilderness were stated as the driving force behind many park establishments many would not have been established if not for the potential of tourism. (Butler & Boyd, 2000, p.9)

Mountain tourism can be classified as a component of nature-based tourism because the natural features of the destination are often-times the main attraction for visitors. Nature-based tourism encompasses activities focused on or in natural areas such as adventure, 'eco' and heritage tourism (McKercher, 1998), which are associated with visiting the often challenging natural and cultural landscapes of mountainous regions.

Adventure tourism brings together travel, sport and outdoor recreation and has been defined as having a perceived element of risk, a need for specialized skills to participate in the activity and a higher level of physical exertion (Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Fennell, 1999). Activities often associated with adventure-based tourism include kayaking, skiing, white water rafting, and backpacking. Heritage

tourism by contrast is “centered on what we have inherited, which can mean anything from historic buildings, to art works, to beautiful scenery” (Yale 1991, p.21). Both heritage and adventure tourism frequently occur in natural settings.

An early definition of ecotourism by Ceballos-Lascurain’s (1987) is:

travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas. (p.14)

Though the concept of ecotourism continues to be debated in academic literature (Boo 1991; Tickell 1994; Buckley 1994; Blamey, 1997; Fennell, 1999; Sirakaya, Sasidharna & Sonmez, 1999), it is generally agreed that ecotourism should not only provide an enjoyable and educational experience for the visitor, but do so in a way that is both ecologically and culturally responsible while providing some form of benefit to the host community. Mountain ecotourism continues to develop in Western North America as does all other forms of nature-based tourism (Williams & Fennell, 2002).

Buckley (2000) suggested that natural environments and adventure are the primary attractions of the nature-based tourism product and that the majority of associated activities are focused in parks and protected areas (PPA). Increasingly within this segment, people rely on commercial guides and outfitters to provide package adventure and nature tours (Buckley, 2000). Nature-based tourism does not necessarily incorporate the best practices of environmental management nor a conservation or educational component. However, incorporating ecotourism philosophies into nature-based tourism has the potential to reduce negative impacts on the resource while contributing to sustainable tourism. In this way, ecotourism can contribute to the protection of mountain ecosystems, many of which are under some form of protection (e.g., conservation area, national park). Thus, tourism developers and park managers must aim to ensure that decisions made in such parks and protected areas (PPAs) benefit both the tourism industry and the natural resource (Williams & Fennell, 2002).

Most nature-based tourism in PPA's has educational components that address forest history, park management, flora and fauna sightings, and other similar interpretive activities and materials (Buckley, 2000). Creating responsible use of the natural resource by visitors to PPA's continues to be encouraged by the development of interpretive programs. So what is interpretation? And how is interpretation used as a management tool in PPA's? The following sections of this literature review aim to explore these two questions and provide a background towards an understanding of the development of an interpretation accreditation system in Banff National Park.

2.3. Defining Interpretation

One of the first books written on the fundamentals and philosophy of interpretation was by Freeman Tilden (1957) of the United States, National Park Service. He described interpretation as

an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships to people about the places they visit and the things they see and do there. (p. 40)

Since that time, this concept, which is the core of the interpretation profession has continued to evolve. Beck and Cable (1988) described 'interpretation' as an educational activity that aims to reveal meanings about cultural and natural resources. As Weiler and Ham (2001) explained: "Interpretation is not teaching or 'instruction' in the academic sense" (p.554). Although both teaching and interpretation allow the transfer of information to participants, interpretation involves a different audience that is not being asked to be accountable to recall the information being delivered (Weiler & Ham, 2001).

Therefore a strong interpreter must be able to capture a 'non-captive' audience's attention. The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) defined interpretation as

a mission-based communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource. (NAI, 2007: 1)

NAI argued that the effectiveness of interpretation in enhancing learning lies in its potential to create not only intellectual but also emotional connections with individuals in an audience. To deliver engaging,

entertaining, educational and inspiring interpretive commentary is a skill that requires training, practice, and dedication for mastery.

2.3.1. Interpretation in Park Management

The use of environmental education through interpretation in PPA's has been suggested by many as a successful approach to managing people in such settings (Madin & Fenton, 2004; Tubb, 2003; Stewart, Hayward, Devlin & Kirby, 1998; Moscardo, 1996; Orams, 1996; Beckman, 1987). Environmental interpretation is considered to have the potential to provide meaningful education that helps people identify with their natural and cultural heritage (Moscardo, 1996). Interpretation is believed to have the ability to excite, inspire and feed the spirit of park visitors while promoting appreciation, understanding and stewardship of protected areas (CRD Parks, 2003). It has been argued that use of interpretation as an educational tool can reduce the need for direct enforcement of park regulations and foster appropriate visitor behaviour.

Visitor Management Strategies in National Parks

A variety of visitor management strategies have been implemented to aid in regulating behaviour in parks and protected areas. 'Indirect' and 'direct' are terms that have been referred to in academic literature to categorize the methods and strategies used in managing the visitors of national parks (Hendee, Stankey, & Lucas, 1990). Management strategies such as increased enforcement, zoning or rationing use intensity, entrance and parking fees, implementing rules and regulations, and having security site personnel such as park wardens regulate for appropriate visitor behaviour have all been classified as a 'direct' strategies (Payne & Nilsen, 2002). Interpretation, on the other hand, would be considered an 'indirect' visitor management strategy, as are other forms of information dispersal, eligibility requirements, and physical alterations (Payne & Nilsen, 2002). More recently, some authors in ecotourism (Kuo, 2002, Orams, 1995) have used 'hard' (restrictions, fines) and 'soft' (interpretation and tourism marketing) in preference to the terms 'direct' and 'indirect' respectively.

As Kuo (2002) explained:

When applied alone hard visitor management strategies are unlikely to be effective in the long term... restrictions on where people can and cannot go along with applied fines enforced by security have a strong potential to reduce visitor satisfaction. (p. 5)

Therefore 'soft' or 'indirect' visitor management strategies (in particular persuasive interpretive information) have been considered as being not only more likely to influence visitor behaviour but also less likely to detract from visitor experiences.

Effectiveness of Interpretation

The effectiveness of interpretation in reaching the goals of sustainable tourism of parks and protected areas was evaluated in Tubb's (2003) study. Using the High Moorland Visitor Centre in Dartmoor National Park, UK as a case study, visitors completed a pre-and post-visit questionnaire, to assess the effectiveness of interpretation in increasing visitors' knowledge, promoting attitude change and behaviour modification (Tubb, 2003). The results indicated that although attitude changes occurred only towards specific issues, visitors did gain knowledge on park related problems and they became more aware of how they could modify their behaviour to minimize environmental impacts (Tubb, 2003).

Madin and Fenton (2004) assessed the effectiveness of interpretation programs in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, Australia in educating visitors on environmental issues and helping to create sustainable tourism practices. Their study concluded that interpretation programs can positively impact visitors' understandings of key reef topics and environmental issues, which generally supports the earlier work of Tubb (2003).

Interpretive messages have also been noted to aid visitors in a park setting in developing attachment to a place. In a research study conducted in Mount Cook National Park in New Zealand, Stewart, Hayway, Devlin & Kirby (1998), explored the impact that interpretation programs can have on creating place attachment amongst visitors. A critical finding from their qualitative study was that short stay visitors, who participated in interpretive programs increased their ability to transform an undifferentiated

space into a meaningful place. This enhanced appreciation of place was attributed to a higher level of empathy and caring developed in the visitors to Mount Cook National Park and resulted in a heightened interest in ensuring conservation of the area. As Steward et al. argued:

A critical finding of this study is that people who have short stay experiences at a place such as Mount Cook can develop an undifferentiated space into a meaningful sense of place. This differs from findings that suggest that such a transition could only occur with residence in a place. (Steward et al, 1998, p. 263)

As Tubb's (2003) study indicated, interpretation has the potential to make people more aware of how their behaviour could be modified to help minimize environmental impacts. Maloney and Ward (1973, cited in Culen et al.,1984) tapped into the realization that the solutions to environmental problems do not lie in traditional technological approaches but rather in the alteration of human behaviour. A research study conducted in Shiloh National Military Park, Tennessee, revealed that interpretation was effective in reducing cultural resource damage (Gramann, 2000). The study was theoretically grounded in prosocial behaviour theory (Schwartz, 1977).

Prosocial behaviour has been defined as voluntary behaviour done to help or not help others, without the incentive of material rewards or the threat of probable punishment respectively (Gramann, 2000). Schwartz (1977) examined how prosocial actions would be more likely when people are aware of the consequences of their helping (or not helping) others or the environment. This theory argues that people are more likely to behave prosocially when they feel personally responsible and qualified to help. Gramann's (2000) study demonstrated how relevant and appropriate information and interpretation can play a major role in creating awareness of the protective regulations in parks and why they are considered necessary. The results of the study indicated that interpretation was effective in altering behaviours and was also less expensive than 'direct' management approaches.

Interpretation has been shown in a number of studies to be a successful approach to managing people in PPA's and nature-based settings, which explains its wide use as an 'indirect' strategy in such areas. While designing good interpretive programs presents a challenge to agencies and operators, significantly

more daunting challenges lie in finding suitably qualified guides, developing and implementing effective training programs, and retaining qualified staff in the industry (Moscardo, 1996; Beckman 1987; cited in Papageorgiou 2001).

2.4. Tour Guides

Interpretative signage, guides, and themed programs all have the ability to present information that can engage the audience and visitors to parks and protected areas. Though interpretation can be delivered in many forms it has been noted by previous researchers (Cockrell, Bange & Roggenbuck, 1984) that face-to-face interpretation may be the most effective in increasing the level of knowledge of visitors and fostering understanding of appropriate behaviours. Therefore, tour guides become an essential interface between the host destination and its visitors. Despite this recognition of the importance of tour guides, some authors argue that little research has been published that focuses specifically on the role and training of nature-based guides (e.g., Black & Ham, 2005).

2.4.1. Roles of a Tour Guide

Tour guides are the front-line employees responsible for the overall impression and satisfaction with tourism services delivered at a destination (Ap & Wong, 2000). The tour guide has been defined as a person who guides groups or individual visitors around buildings, sites, and landscapes and who interprets the cultural and natural heritage of the environment (Black & Ham, 2005). It is Cohen's (1985) view that interpretation and not the mere dissemination of information is the distinguishing communicative function of the trained tourist guide. However, tour guides perform a variety of functions. Black and Weiler's (2005) research indicated ten possible roles of a tour guide including: interpreter/educator, information giver, leader, motivator of conservation values, social role/catalyst, navigator/protector, broker/mediator, tour and group manager/organizer, public relations/company representative, and finally a facilitator to access non-public areas. It is evident that interpretation is just one of the many roles that a tour guide may need to perform!

Tour guides who are operating in nature-based settings, especially those working for operators offering an adventure, heritage or ecotourism product, have many responsibilities often including the task of communicating messages on the environment and enhancing their guests understanding of the resource (Haig & McIntyre, 1998). Weiler and Crabtree (1998) also noted that there was an apparent gap between what guides should be able to do on the job and what they actually did. With the use of interpretation to inform and educate visitors on appropriate behaviours, tour guide training in nature-based settings should emphasize the development of interpretation skills to help ensure quality (Knudson, Cable & Beck, 1995; Pond, 1993; Prentice, 1995).

2.4.2. Quality Assurance of Tour Guides

Black and Weiler (2005) conducted a systematic review of the tour guiding industry from which they concluded that there were six methods used individually or in combination to assure quality of the tourism product. These methods included: codes of conduct, awards of excellence, licensing, and significantly for this study, professional associations, professional certification and the training of guides. Table 2.1 shows a breakdown of the characteristics and outcomes of each of the six quality assurance methods that were reviewed by these authors.

Table 2.1

Comparison of Mechanisms to Potentially Improve Guiding Performance

<u>Characteristics and Outcomes</u>	<u>Mechanisms to improve guiding performance</u>					
	Codes of Conduct	Professional Associations	Awards of Excellence	Training	Professional Certification	Licensing
1. Compulsory	No	Possibly	No	Possibly	No	Yes
2. Achieves minimum standards	No	Possibly	No	Yes	Possibly	Yes
3. Rewards Excellence	No	Possibly	Yes	Possibly	Possibly	Possibly
4. Raises awareness of high standards among guides	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. Increases credibility of guiding in industry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Advantages and Disadvantages						
6. Benefits the consumer	Yes	Yes	Possibly	Yes	Yes	Yes
7. High set up costs (money & time)	Possibly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
8. High operational costs	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
9. Formal assessment of guide required	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
10. Requires a formal application process	No	Possibly	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. Financial costs to the guide	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

From Black & Weiler (2005)

Codes of Conduct are voluntary forms of quality control that essentially encourage operators to provide tours that support sustaining the heritage of the resource (Black & Weiler, 2005). This approach given its “voluntary nature (is) seen as providing more suasion amongst members” (Black & Weiler: 28). An example of one such voluntary code of conduct is the ‘Whale Watch Operators NorthWest.’ This ‘ethical’ way to view orca’s (*Orcinus orca*) has been adopted by several dozen tour operators in British Columbia, Canada, and in Washington State, USA (Garrod & Fennell, 2004). One of the biggest challenges in using codes of conduct to promote quality in the guiding industry is that it is difficult to ensure compliance (Mason & Mowforth, 1996, cited in Black & Weiler, 2005).

Awards of Excellence have been used to reward and honour both individual guides and tour guiding businesses in an effort to assure quality in the industry. In Banff National Park, for example, the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation (BHTC) awards businesses that excel in heritage orientation training for employees, environmental practices, and best heritage related products (BHTC, 2007). In Australia, by way of contrast, the Golden Guide Award and the National EcoGuide awards are given to individual guides who

demonstrate guiding excellence (Black & Weiler, 2005). Award systems are considered to recognize best practice in the industry. However, Black and Weiler indicated that because awards of excellence are limited to only a few people or companies, there is the danger that this may create a disincentive to the development of quality more generally in the industry.

Unlike codes of conduct or awards of excellence, *Licensing* is a mandatory requirement put in place to ensure quality (Black & Weiler, 2005). It is often regulated by a government agency and may be focused on individual guides or tourism operators. Guides will often have the option of becoming 'licensed' to guide in specific areas by going through specific training or certification requirements. In Greece, for example, training is provided through the Organisation of Tourism Education and Training Institute (OTEKI) which run specialized state schools. These schools "operate as legal entities of public law supervised by the Ministry of Development" (OTEKI, 2007). The duration of studies is 2.5 years and course modules range from Modern Greek History and Ancient Greek Mythology to Tourist Psychology and Speech Training. Graduation from the government run educational program is compulsory for all guides working in museums, park sites, monuments, and churches in the country. Every OTEKI accredited guide is considered a national guide which means he or she will have a license to guide in any area of the country. Many countries including China, Indonesia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, require licensing as a requirement to work as guide (Black & Weiler, 2005). In Banff National Park, guiding businesses must be licensed by Parks Canada to operate in the park. Licensing is considered beneficial in the guiding industry as it provides an element of consumer protection; however, it may encourage only a minimum standard and the enforcement of licensing requirements often proves challenging (Black & Weiler, 2005).

Training, professional associations and certification are often combined in a variety of forms to assist in gaining quality assurance in the guiding industry. Though many universities and college programs offer courses and programs in interpretation at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Christie & Mason, 2003; Knudson, et al, 1995), professional guiding associations have also developed their own training and

certification. The Field Guides Associates of South Africa (FGASA) and the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) in Banff, Canada are two examples of associations which provide both training courses as well as certification/accreditation for guides. Some are more international in scope. For example, the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) which has members in both United States and Canada is an organisation that aims to advance the profession of heritage interpretation and provides certification and training workshops not only for guides but also for managers, trainers, and planners of interpretive programs (NAI, 2007:1). Professional guiding associations providing training and certification have also been set up in developing countries such as the Galapagos Guides of Ecuador and in Indonesia (Dahles, 2002, Black & Ham, 2005).

A highly respected eco-guide training program is the Australian EcoGuide Program which was developed in 2001 (Black & Weiler, 2005; Black & Ham, 2005). The EcoGuide Program was developed to promote best practice in guiding standards in the nature-based tourism industry and is a method of eco-certification that was developed for the larger and more comprehensive Ecotourism Australia program (Black & Ham, 2005). The Eco Certification program developed in 1991 was a world first in certifying tours, attractions and accommodations as products in nature-based and ecotourism markets (EcoGuide, 2007). Through guide certification, the EcoGuide program seeks to increase the level of professionalism in the industry while contributing to an increase in the level of natural and cultural interpretation (EcoGuide, 2007). The development and success of eco certification in Australia has helped establish professional associations and professional certification as useful methods of assuring quality in the tour guiding industry in that country and has set a standard for similar programs elsewhere (Black & Ham, 2005).

Certification has been seen to enhance the level of knowledge and abilities of tour guides while increasing the level of professionalism in the industry. Crabtree and Black (2000) noted its value in assisting the identification of training gaps both for the individual and organisations and as a basis for selecting

employees. Over the past ten years, the perceived benefits of accreditation have encouraged the growing development of professional certification schemes in the guiding industry (Black & Weiler, 2005).

2.4.3. Perceived Negative Aspects of Guiding Certification/ Accreditation

Though there are many positives benefits to accreditation in the guiding industry, there are also negatives. Chisholm and Shaw (2004) discussed the development of audit and accreditation in regards to the New Zealand outdoors industry. Their article suggests that the process of certification has the potential to undermine the trust that experienced guides can do their job, and has the potential to place unnecessary sanctions on those operators who chose not to conform to the accreditation system. Also the mandatory nature of many of these schemes give the governing accrediting body a high level of power that has the potential to be misused.

Professional certification programs are also noted as being very costly to implement, and this often leads to a lack of industry support. (Harris & Jargo, 2001). Individuals may also not be able to enter certification programs due to eligibility criteria, lack of time, or lack of finances (Black & Weiler, 2005). If issues arise such as guides being poorly paid and there being a lack of permanent employment it may increase barriers for guides wanting or willing to be part of the accreditation process. For guides to be interested in the accreditation process a question that needs to be continually addressed by the professional association is: “What benefits are there for the individual guide in obtaining the qualifications?” (Harris & Jargo, 2001).

Implementing accreditation as a more rigorous process also has the potential to decrease the number of people wanting to work in the guiding industry. Harris and Jargo (2001) suggest that:

Such an outcome (decreasing the amount of individuals interest in becoming accredited) may not be desirable if the original intent of an accreditation program is to improve the quality of human resources in the particular sector concerned. Additionally, such a deterrent may act against achieving the economies of scale necessary to reach the point where a scheme is self-funding. (p.389)

2.5. Tourism Seasonality and its Impact on the Nature-based Guiding Industry

One challenge in the travel industry, which may have an impact on membership enthusiasm for professional guiding associations, is the seasonality of the work. High employee turn-over and the ability to retain high quality staff is a common result of seasonality in a tourism-based economy (Butler, 2001). Tourism migration (Williams & Hall, 2000) among employees may be due to a variety of factors including: short term employment rather than long term sustainable jobs, the expense of living (i.e. finding suitable housing) in resort communities, and the personality characteristics of the individuals choosing to work in the industry (Adler & Adler 1999a; Hettinger 2005). The retention of experienced tour guides may impact negatively on the quality of interpretation within a tourism destination, and the ability to maintain a professional guiding association. As explained by Black and Weiler (2005):

Professional associations have the potential to be the most comprehensive mechanism in addressing the range of roles associated with tour guiding... (However, its success) often depends on the interest of its members. (p.29)

The peripatetic lifestyle of potential members of a professional guiding organisation certainly may hinder its overall success. Yet perhaps, there are additional concerns from stakeholders of professional guiding associations that challenge the overall success of this method of quality assurance in a nature-based tourism community. Exploring the perceptions of stakeholders with professional guiding associations that administer professional guide certification may be a worthy area of investigation. Black and Ham (2005) further reinforce this assertion:

The review of literature revealed the paucity of published material available in the field of tour guiding... with respect to the development of professional certification programs. Notably lacking was attention to program content, the program development processes used, program elements and stakeholder's views on certification. Opportunities exist for research into these issues within tour guiding and allied fields...as well as experiences of professionals in other countries. (p.194)

2.6. Exploring Stakeholders Perceptions on Professional Guiding Certification and Associations

In the foregoing review, I have demonstrated that only limited research has been conducted into the role (Black & Weiler, 2005) and training (Christie & Mason, 2003) of tour guides in the context of nature-based tourism. Missing particularly are stakeholders' views on the certification process. Clearly, there is scope for inductive research to explore this quality assurance method through the experience of participants and stakeholders. This led me to the main question guiding my research, which broadly stated is as follows: "How do participants and stakeholders perceive interpretation accreditation systems in a nature-based guiding community?" I subsequently explored this question through an in-depth analysis of the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association's certification program in Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada.

Exploring the perceptions of stakeholders of an interpretation accreditation system aimed to add relevant research to the field of interpretation, professional certification, and quality assurance of tour guides working in nature-based settings. This research also brought insight into nature-based guiding from a Canadian perspective. Understanding the lived experiences of those involved with a professional guiding association and the factors that influence the success of an organisation has the potential to bring new depths of understanding to the fields of outdoor leadership and recreation as well as parks and tourism.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In order to examine interpretive guiding in professional associations and accreditation in nature-based settings this study adopted a qualitative approach. Using the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) located in Banff National Park as a descriptive case study, aimed to uncover the views, beliefs, opinions and lived experiences of those involved with a professional guiding association and accreditation system.

This chapter will begin by explaining why a qualitative approach was chosen for this research. I will provide a brief overview of MPHIA and the Banff guiding community to enrich the understanding of the case I explored. This will be followed by a discussion of the specific methods employed and aspects of sampling, data collection and analyses.

3.2. Qualitative Research Approach

As little research has been undertaken on tour guide accreditation in nature-based settings, this study was exploratory in nature and a qualitative methodology was considered appropriate to gain understanding of the lived experience of those involved (Cresswell, 2003; Schwandt, 2001). The merit of qualitative research is that it allows for a deep probing of issues and concerns. The idea of acquiring an “insider” understanding is a powerful central concept in the rationale for qualitative inquiry (Schwandt, 2001, p.102). Using such an approach resulted in a deep understanding of the guiding community’s perception of MPHIA and the development of interpretive guide certification in Banff National Park.

3.2.1. Descriptive Case Study

Stake (1995) writes that, “The goal of a case study approach is to analyze the particulars and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p.7). MPHIA was

chosen as the case in study and by exploring the perceptions of a variety of stakeholders' relationships, behaviours and attitudes towards MPHIA, an understanding of this case was achieved.

3.2.2. A Phenomenological Approach

The goal of phenomenology is to learn about the nature or "essence" of particular, everyday experiences in people's lives (deMarris, 2004; Schwandt, 2001). Welman and Kruger (1999) stated that "phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved" (p. 189). The phenomenological orientation asks,

how people constitute life, how they think, believe, remember, anticipate, decide and choose, why people engage in certain actions, what relevance those actions have to the individuals and how people relate to the many features of social life that impact on their intents and relevancies (Rothe, 1994, p. 43).

To achieve this, I undertook in-depth interviews with people who had direct experience with MPHIA; the phenomenon of interest.

A phenomenological approach is based on the assumption that there is an essence or essences (views, opinions, and mutual understandings) to shared experience (Patton, 2002). To develop an understanding, of the stakeholders' perceptions of MPHIA, I initially examined the interviews separately. By doing so, I was able to identify individual opinions about MPHIA's training and accreditation programs. Those unique essences were then compared with the group. One of the defining points of phenomenology is to assume commonality in human experiences (Eichelberger, 1989). My research aimed to report on the similarities of the stakeholders views. However, I also reported on individual perceptions on the Association, as it was brought to my attention by the work of Dupuis (1999) that in qualitative research it may be:

...no longer acceptable to only present the commonalities among participants; the stories and theories we construct should be particularly mindful of, and directly incorporate, the themes, cases, or issues that do not 'fit'. (p.55)

3.2.3. Reflexivity

One of the components of qualitative inquiry involves the researcher becoming aware of his/her personal bias. As explained by Patton (2002):

The qualitative analyst owns and is reflective about her or his own voice and perspective; a credible voice conveys authenticity and trustworthiness; complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity underlining credibility, the researcher's focus becomes balance-understanding and depicting the world authentically in all its complexity while being self-analytical, politically aware and reflexive in consciousness. (p. 41)

Phenomenologists believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise (Hammersley, 2000) Reflexivity has entered the field of qualitative research to focus on the importance of self-awareness, political and cultural consciousness, and ownership of one's perspective (Patton, 2002). Reflexivity reminds the qualitative researcher to be aware of one's own perspective while also being aware of the perspective of those he/she interviews and those to whom he/she reports (Patton, 2002).

In order to be aware of my own personal biases on MPHIA, guide associations and certification more generally, I reflected on my thoughts, experiences and perceptions based on my personal experience with MPHIA and as a member of the Banff guiding community in a journal prior to commencing my field work. My initial perceptions are detailed in Chapter Four.

I am in agreement with these statements of Stanley and Wise (1983):

We see the presence of the researcher's self as central in all research. One's self can't be left behind, it can only be omitted from discussion and written accounts of the research process. But it *is* an omission, a failure to discuss something which has been present in the research itself. The researcher may be unwilling to admit this or unable to see its importance, but it nevertheless remains so. (p.262)

Therefore, I consider it important to note that my personal understandings of the Banff Guiding Community and its relationship with MPHIA have also been present throughout my exploration, interpretation and writing of the stakeholders' perceptions. However, my understandings of tourism, parks management and related topics has also been further developed through my extended research and

academic experience and I believe this has given me a broader scope to reflect on and prepare the results and the discussion sections of this research.

3.3. The Case: The Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA)

MPHIA is an educational not-for-profit organisation that was established in 1997 after Parks Canada and local tour operators agreed that standards for interpretive guide training needed to be established and administered by an accrediting organisation (Verhurst, 2005). Parks Canada enforces the knowledge standards in interpretation for guides working in the Rocky Mountain Park system. These standards vary depending on the guiding role (for example higher levels of knowledge and interpretation are deemed necessary for hiking guides over rafting guides.) MPHIA's role is to administer and deliver courses that are taught to those standards (Verhurst, 2005).

MPHIA is responsible for accrediting guides as Standard, Professional and Master Interpreters and, in part, it views its mandate as creating a community of guides within Banff, Jasper, Kootenay and Yoho National Parks. As of January 2007, 279 individuals had been accredited as professional interpreters, 362 individuals had completed the standard/apprentice course and 343 people had completed the Basic course. The majority of these accredited guides operate in Banff National Park.

3.3.1: Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks

The Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks are located in the western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia and comprise four National Parks (Banff, Jasper, Kootenay, and Yoho) and three Provincial Parks (Assiniboine, Humber, and Mount Robson) (Figure, 3.1). The whole area was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1990 and consists of 2,306,884 ha or 22, 990 square kilometers (roughly the same size as the country of Switzerland) of protected area.

This mountainous landscape is recognized as a World Heritage Site for its aesthetic qualities, its floral and faunal diversity, and for being a prime example of ongoing geological processes such as glaciation and canyon formation (World Heritage Sites, 2007). The Rocky Mountains are known to be regionally

important as they ensure the protection of heritage resources and large tracts of wilderness (MPHIA, Manual, 2006). MPHIA was established to maintain high standards in heritage interpretation in Canada's Rocky Mountain National Parks.



From Parks Canada(2007)

Figure 3.1 Canadian Rocky Mountain National Parks

The *Bow Valley* is a geographical location which runs along the upper Bow River in Alberta, Canada. The Bow Valley is home to the towns of Banff and Canmore, the Hamlet of Lake Louise, and the communities of the Municipal District of Bighorn (including Harvie Heights, Lac des Arcs, Deadmans Flats, and Exshaw). Canmore is the largest of the communities with a population of over 12, 000

(Statistics Canada, 2006). It is located 100km west of Alberta's largest city Calgary and is a 15 minute drive from the gates of Banff National Park.

Banff National Park was established as Canada's first National Park in 1885. It is the most visited of the four Rocky Mountain National Parks and hosts up to 5 million visitors annually (Ritchie, Hudson and Timur, 2002). The town of *Banff* is located within the park's boundary and has a population of 8,352 (Town of Banff Family, 2006). It is within the town of Banff that the majority of hotels and other accommodation, restaurants, and guest services are available for visitors to the park. The town of Banff is also where the majority of Parks Canada personnel and private guiding outfitters operating in the park are based. MPHIA's head office is located in the township and it is here that the majority of MPHIA's programs and services are offered.

3.3.1. The Banff Guiding Community

The Banff guiding community is comprised of individual guides, the operation owners and managers of guiding businesses and Parks Canada. The variety of guides working in Banff is extensive. For example there are guides involved in day hiking, backpacking, scenic-bus touring, angling, climbing, rafting, horseback riding, mountain biking, historical tours, cross-country and back country skiing. Private businesses offer the majority of guided experience in the park, however, there are also Parks Canada interpreters who provide what is referred to as 'roving' interpretation, theatrical campground presentations and historical site shows. With the introduction of MPHIA, the guiding community has expanded to include the directors and board members of the association as well as the instructors of programs and evaluators of the accreditation procedures. These various stakeholders and their relationships with each other are shown in Figure 3.2.

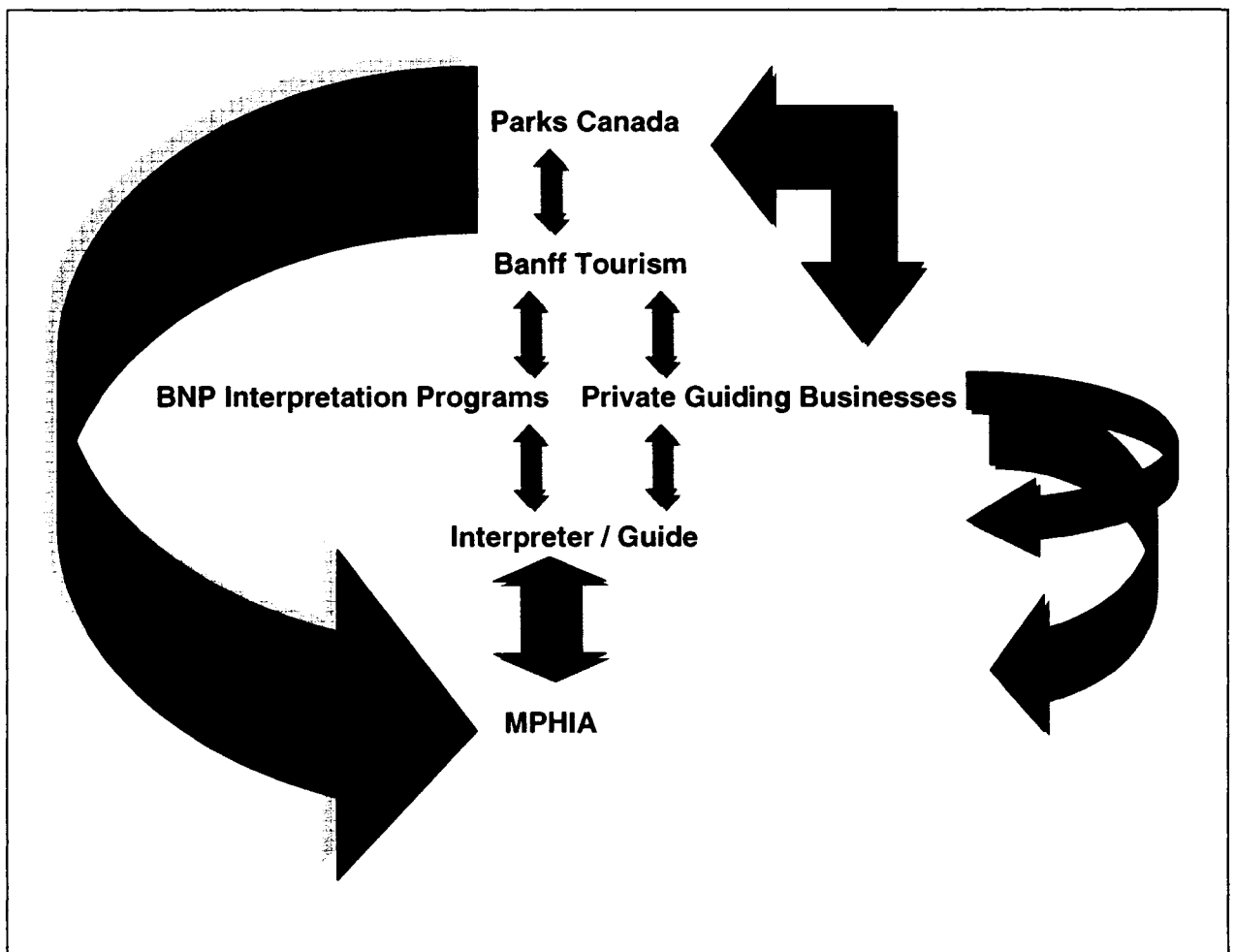


Figure 3.2 Relationships within the Banff Guiding Community

3.4. Sample Selection and Sample Size

In order to study the phenomenon of MPHIA and its role within the Banff guiding community, purposive sampling was chosen to select key stakeholders. Purposive sampling is considered one of the most important kinds of non-probability sampling (Welman & Kruger, 1999). The logic of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich participants. By specifically selecting a cross sample of interviewees who represented the different stakeholders in the Banff guiding community, I aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of MPHIA rather than broad generalizations.

The strategy of using maximum variation in purposive sampling aims at capturing and describing central themes that emerge over a diverse sample. Data-triangulation also implies the importance of diversifying participants in a research sample to allow for differences and commonalities to emerge in opinions (Patton, 2002). By selecting a small sample using maximum variation and utilizing the concept of data-triangulation, the analysis aimed to reveal high-quality detailed descriptions from each stakeholder, which facilitated uncovering uniqueness and also enabled comparisons across participants.

3.4.1. Study Participants

Individual guides were interviewed as well as operation owners/managers of various guide businesses and, individuals who were involved with the management of MPHIA. In total, fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted. Seven of the interviews were with guides representing different guiding roles (i.e., horseback riding, hiking, Parks Canada Interpreter), accreditation levels, experiences and expertise. Two operation managers and two operation owners representing different guiding businesses in the park, three members of the MPHIA board and executive and a Parks Canada representative were also included.

3.4.2. Ethical Considerations

All participants for this study were recruited directly, through personal approach, email or telephone. Prior to participants agreeing to be involved in the study, they were given a letter describing the intent of the research and their expected level of involvement (see Appendix B) this was also re-stated to all participants immediately prior to the interview. Participants signed consent forms (see Appendix C) to indicate their understanding of the research and their agreement to be involved. In addition, prior to giving written consent to be interviewed, informants holding public positions (e.g. MPHIA executives), were informed about the challenges of maintaining anonymity in a small community.

In order to protect participants' identities throughout the research, pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality. Also the names of specific Banff businesses were not used and were referred to only by

the type of guiding service delivered. Any subsequent reports, papers and presentations that are written with excerpts from these transcripts will also use only pseudonyms to identify participants. The digital recordings, consent forms, demographic information, and transcribed interviewees were kept in a secure location accessible only to the researcher and will be stored similarly for seven years within Lakehead University, as required by the Tri-Council Policy.

3.5. Data Collection

Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were used as the method of data collection for this qualitative study. The purpose of the interviews was to gain understanding of insiders' perspectives (Patton, 2002). The interviews allowed me to have control over the line of questioning yet provided the participants with the chance to share their perspective of MPHIA. The interviews were arranged in such a way as to encourage the participants to reflect on their experiences in the Banff guiding community and with MPHIA. Permission of the participants was sought to record the interviews using a digital recorder and field notes were also taken during the interviews and compiled immediately following.

The interviews were conducted in the town of Banff during June, July and August of 2006 at a location and on a date and time chosen by the participant involved. Most of the interviews took place in the outdoors on park benches, some in people's homes and others at places of business. The interviews ranged from 30 to 90 minutes in length.

I began my data collection by interviewing the guides first and this was followed by the operation managers/owners and finally the board members of MPHIA. This allowed me to incorporate questions and further explore issues that emerged from interviews with individual guides subsequently with operators and later to incorporate the views of both of these latter groups in discussions with MPHIA management. As explained by Holstein and Gubrium (1995),

...active interviewing takes advantage of the growing stockpile of background knowledge that the interviewer collects in prior interviews to pose concrete questions and explore facets of respondents' circumstances that would not otherwise be probed. (p. 46)

Initial thematic coding was developed in the field by listening to and making notes from the interviews. The initial coding was used to develop emergent themes. These themes were able to be further explored as the interviews progressed by the asking of questions on related topics to the other stakeholders. Therefore, perceptions gained from interviews at one level were able to be cross referenced with those at succeeding levels of the training hierarchy. For example, guides who were interviewed often commented on how long they planned to work as a guide in the Bow Valley and such comments prompted me to ask operation managers about hiring and retaining guides for their respective businesses.

3.5.1. Semi-Structured Interview

As research had suggested that novice interviewers were more successful at using semi-structured interviews (Shank, 2006), I choose to standardise the interviews to some degree to accommodate my initial experience. This approach had the added advantage that it allowed for comparability across the interviews. One procedure that is particularly favoured by semi-structured interviewers is generating a list of critical questions (Shank, 2006) to be used as a checklist to ensure essential topics are covered throughout the interview. This method was employed (refer to Appendix D and Appendix E). However, during the interviews I tried to be flexible as unplanned topics often emerged as the interviews progressed.

The initial questions asked of the stakeholders focused on their experience as members of the Banff guiding community. Not only did this help me gain a rapport with those being interviewed, but their background gave me an understanding about their perceptions of MPHIA. A narrative of how they came to be occupying their particular role in the summer of 2006 provided insight into their perspectives on interpretation, park management, the tourism industry, the community of Banff, tour guide training, and the practice of professional guide certification. The interviews then moved to explore the two main themes of guide training and the role of interpretation and their relationship, involvement in and

perception of MPHIA. This questioning strategy was designed to provide data on the main objectives of the research study, namely:

- To review certification systems for interpretive guides that have been developed in nature-based tourism in park settings
- To exploring key stakeholders' perceptions of an accreditation system for interpretive guides
- To further develop understanding of professional guiding associations and professional guiding certification by adding relevant research to the field of interpretation, accreditation, and evaluation of tour guides who are working in nature-based settings

3.5.2. Data Collection through Observations

In order to further explore MPHIA and gain a stronger perspective of the organisation and its program offerings, I attended the two-day Standard Level Course as a participant observer in May, 2006. I also observed the evaluation procedures for the Oral Accreditation Exam for the Professional Interpreter in that same month. In addition, throughout the summers of 2006, I had many informal conversations with guides, operation owners and Parks Canada employees about the concept of interpretation, accreditation and MPHIA. I maintained a field diary in which I compiled my perceptions based on observing the in-class and evaluation sessions and informal conversations with individuals.

3.6. Data Interpretation

Interpreting the data began by repeated listening to the recorded interviews. Thirteen of the fourteen interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees. One interviewee requested not to be recorded and, in that instance, extensive notes were taken. Following my research in the field, I transcribed all recorded interviews and colour coded the text as a reference tool, to identify the participant who provided the information. The process of transcribing each interview enabled me to become familiar with the interviews and allowed me to extract the main aspects of the participants' perspective on MPHIA.

A comprehensive exploration of MPHIA's website (www.mphia.org) suggested that three major themes provided a broad framework for organising the data: educational programming; the regulation of the accreditation standards; and the relationships the organisation has developed with its partners and its members. The transcribed interviews were reviewed systematically and comments that referred to any of these three themes were noted. This process revealed a number of sub-categories and conceptual diagrams were created to help envision the many complex and interconnected relationships among these.

Determining how informants' comments were to be categorized often proved difficult due to the overlaps that occurred across categories. For example, comments made about MPHIA's image were evident in educational programming, the regulation of accreditation standards and the relationship it had developed with its partners and its members. This was somewhat resolved by recognising these as emergent categories that would be useful to discuss and explore further.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS

4.1. Introduction

By understanding the perceptions of all stakeholders (guides, operations owners, Parks Canada, and MPHIA's management) in regards to an accreditation program, the purpose of this research was to first enhance the overall programs and services offered by a professional guiding association, and second, to gain a greater understanding of professional associations and professional certification systems that are being developed in the nature-based guiding industry. These results aim to present how such an association has impacted a guiding community.

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the perceptions that members of the Banff guiding community have towards the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association. My perspective of MPHIA is presented first and this is followed by descriptions of the individual stakeholders who were interviewed. The programs and services that were offered by MPHIA in 2006 are also outlined. The remaining three sections of the chapter examine: (1) the stakeholders' perceptions of MPHIA's educational programs, including a historical overview of the introduction of the Association into Banff National Park; (2) the stakeholders' perceptions of the regulation of the accreditation standards; and (3) the relationships MPHIA has developed with its community partners, board members and its own membership.

4.2. A Personal Perspective on MPHIA

In order to effectively interpret the perceptions of the Banff guiding community towards MPHIA and the concept of accreditation, I begin by sharing my own personal perspectives on the organisation. My experience of living within Banff National Park certainly has had an impact on my interest in researching the concept of accreditation for interpretive guides. I feel that it is important to outline my

history with the Association so as to gain perspective on how my opinion and standpoint towards MPHIA has also developed over time.

My involvement with MPHIA began in my second year living in Banff National Park. The lure of the Rocky Mountains and the ability to hike, ski and snowboard brought me to Banff in the fall of 2002. Like many before me, I began working within the tourism and hospitality sector while constantly looking forward to my hours and days off to take advantage of the ski hills in the winter and the hiking trails in the summer.

In my second winter of living in Banff I was given the opportunity to go on a guided walk with an interpretive guide to Johnston Canyon. This carved-out limestone canyon displays the most intriguing frozen waterfalls and formations of crystal blue ice. I had completed the hike several times over the past year but never with an interpretive guide. His knowledge of the geological process that created not only this particular canyon but the landscape of the Rocky Mountains intrigued me completely. His interpretation created such a connection with me that I knew that I needed to continue to learn more about the environment in which I was living and playing.

My guide that winter day informed me of a professional level course that was offered by MPHIA which would give a broad understanding of not only the natural processes of the landscape but also insight into the heritage of the Bow Valley and the Banff National Park management strategies. So with a passion awakened in me I chose to take a week off work without pay and signed up for the MPHIA course.

I took the MPHIA Professional Level one week course in the spring of 2003. There were 20 people in the class and each student except for myself and two College teachers of a Calgary-based outdoor recreation program were guides who were presently working in Banff National Park. It wasn't until that first day of the program when I began speaking to a hiking guide that I was made aware that most participants were taking the course because it was a step towards becoming accredited in interpretation.

This course was to help prepare them for the written and oral exams which were they needed to pass if they wanted to work as a guide in the National Park.

In the spring of 2003, MPHIA had just hired a new Executive Director who would assist in making a variety of changes and additions to the programs offered including the development of three separate courses at different levels. However, when I took the MPHIA course it was the only course offered and it was considered to be at the Professional Level.

The one week course was divided into different sections the first two days included a section on natural processes, looking at the geography and geological process of the Rockies as well as ecology of the mountains. The third day explored the heritage and history of the Rockies. The fourth day examined ecological and commemorative integrity and Park Management. The fifth and final day focused on learning and practicing interpretation and communication skills.

Due to my general lack of knowledge of the landscape, I found the amount of information that was being covered each day to be overwhelming. However, the course certainly inspired me to want to continue to learn more and have a fuller understanding about the place in which I was living. The MPHIA course provided a book list to enable participants to learn more on the area. It was this list that encouraged me to visit the local public library and to begin to work systematically through the list, a process which continues to this day!

It was after I took the MPHIA course in the spring of 2003 that I explored the possibility of guiding on a part-time basis. I was subsequently hired as a guide by a local scenic tour company and was told that my personality, not my knowledge, got me the job. Consequently, I was informed that I needed to read another large stack of books to increase my knowledge to the level needed to do the job well. That summer I started working as a scenic tour guide each Tuesday (my day off from my regular full-time job), taking people on a twenty-four passenger bus to places such as the Columbia Icefield, Lake Louise and Takakakaw Falls. I recall feeling a sense of pride when I first put on my guide uniform. I couldn't

believe that I had become a guide in Banff National Park. I felt truly honoured to have such a position. It didn't take long for my passion and enthusiasm for my part-time job to lead to a career change and to committing myself to guiding full-time and year-round.

I have worked as an interpretive guide now for three summers and one winter season. In that time, I have not taken the MPHIA written test or oral exam to become a Professional Interpreter. At first, I didn't take the exams because I was waiting to accumulate the required 1,600 guiding hours for the qualification. Then, in the spring of 2006, I believed that because of my involvement in this research study, it would be inappropriate for me to be taking the exams at the same time I was researching MPHIA in such detail. I have certainly considered taking both the oral and written exams and I am a little nervous about how difficult the written test would be. I fear my knowledge of the Canadian Rockies may not be sufficient. There certainly is a large amount of information to know and to understand in order to pass the written test for the Professional Interpreter qualification.

So, at this time, I am not an accredited MPHIA guide. After taking the MPHIA Professional Level course, I believed that I did have the Standard Level of certification. I was under the assumption that by taking the five-day Professional Interpreter course that I was automatically accredited at the Standard Level. I now know that this is not the case. I was not aware that to reach the Standard Level of certification I would have to take a separate course and in-class written tests.

The confusion I had in believing that I had the Standard certification level was partly due to the fact that I had a Guide Card given to me by Parks Canada in the winter of 2004 that stated that until March 2006, I was a registered hiking guide and able to take guests hiking in specific areas in Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and Jasper National Parks. The fact that I was not actually accredited by MPHIA at the Standard or Professional Level certainly did not stop me from obtaining a Guide Card or being hired as a guide and delivering (what I believe to be high-quality) interpretive hiking and scenic bus tours.

Why did I not know the correct requirements for me to operate as a guide in Banff National Park? Why was I not aware of the expectations or procedures of the MPHIA accreditation scheme? Why was a Guide Card given to me by Parks Canada two years in a row if I wasn't actually accredited? Why have I been able to continue working as a guide in Banff National Park, if I have not been following the policy on guide accreditation laid down by Parks Canada? These questions have led me to think that the communication of MPHIA's accreditation standards and the enforcement by Parks Canada is somewhat lacking. This perceived lack of enforcement has not encouraged me to prioritize gaining accreditation to prove my abilities as an interpreter in Banff National Park.

Having said that, while I believe there is disorganization in the enforcement of MPHIA's standards, I do not think that MPHIA's educational programs are worthless. In fact, I feel MPHIA's courses are beneficial not only to guides but to all members of the Banff community. The fact that Banff has a non-profit educational organisation that offers courses so that people can gain a stronger understanding about the place where they are living is wonderful. I certainly gained a tremendous amount of insight from taking the PI course in the spring of 2003 and from sitting in on courses being offered in the spring of 2006. Although this is not their express purpose, I would recommend anyone living in Banff to take MPHIA's programs to learn about the natural landscape and the heritage of the area.

I believe the mission of MPHIA to establish and maintain high standards in heritage interpretation in Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks is a worthy goal. How can increasing the level of interpretation and the messages that are passed on to visitors from around the world not be worthwhile? It certainly is important and it should have a direct relationship to providing enhanced visitor experiences and improving the overall tourist experience. Ensuring that guides and businesses that are operating in the park have a quality product that presents educational messages based on the goals of Parks Canada I also consider relevant and needed.

My perception of MPHIA prior to conducting field research was developed from my own experiences with the organisation and from my own involvement with the Banff guiding community. It is important to note that the interpretation and the development of the results and the discussion on the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association and the concept of certification is thus not based on an outsider's perspective but on one that has developed over time through experience in guiding in the Mountain Parks and from undertaking MPHIA qualifications.

4.3. Descriptions of Interviewees from the Banff Guiding Community

What follows is a brief description of the individual members of the Banff guiding community who volunteered to be interviewed for this research. These fourteen individuals were interviewed in the summer of 2006. The interviews allowed for in-depth exploration of issues and concerns, and helped to shed light on the benefits and drawbacks derived from the lived experience of the designers, employers, and consumers of MPHIA's training programs.

Of those interviewed in the summer of 2006, seven were guides, four were operation owners or managers and three were members of the board and executive of MPHIA including Parks Canada representative(s). Although these individuals were selected based on their positions in 2006, their perceptions of and opinions about MPHIA were derived from previous experiences and variable levels of involvement within the Banff guiding community. The interview process made evident that it was difficult to categorize an individual as a 'guide,' 'operations manager' or 'board member' because many had, at different times, acted in one or more of these positions. For example, Andy (all names of individuals have been altered to ensure anonymity and confidentiality) is considered a master level guide is also an instructor for MPHIA's courses, Calvin was an operations manager in 2006 and was previously a board member for MPHIA, and Leslie is a board member who also instructs classes and works as a tour guide.

The interviewees' different roles within the guiding community have undoubtedly influenced their opinions of MPHIA and have added to the overall understanding of the perceptions of the guiding community towards the Association. Table 4.1 provides a summary overview of the relevant characteristics of those interviewed.

Table 4.1
Descriptions of Stakeholders of MPHIA Interviewed in the Summer of 2006

Stakeholder	Current Position	Years in BNP	Education Background	Related Work Experience	Involvement with MPHIA	Level of MPHIA Accreditation Obtained
Individual Guides						
Frasier	Scenic Tour & Hiking Guide	3	Technical Forestry College Program ACMG Certifications	Forestry Skiing, and climbing instructor	Member of MPHIA	Standard Accreditation
Hank	Angling Guide	15	High school	Hospitality Guest Service	Little to No Involvement with MPHIA	No Accreditation
Ingrid	Parks Canada Interpreter	8	University degree in Philosophy Drama and French	Information Centers/ Guest Service	Member of MPHIA	Professional Accreditation
Jim	Japanese Hiking and Scenic tour guide	10	High school Outward Bound	Dog sledding, Backpacking & Hiking Guide	Member of MPHIA Participated in MPHIA organized outings	Professional Accreditation
Gary	Scenic Tour & Hiking Guide	3	International Business & Ecotourism College programs	Dog sledding, Backpacking, Canoeing Guide	Member of MPHIA Little Involvement with MPHIA's On-Going Programs	Standard Accreditation
Kevin	Horse Guide	7	Agriculture Technology & Advanced Farrier College Programs	Cattle Farms Horse Ranch	No Involvement	No Accreditation
Andy	Multi-day Scenic Tour Guide	25	Masters in Environmental Studies	Interpretive Tour Guiding both Public and Private Sectors	Teaches courses for MPHIA actively involved with programming	Master Level Accreditation

All names have been altered to ensure anonymity and confidentiality

Table 4.1 (continued)

Descriptions of Stakeholders of MPHIA Interviewed in the Summer of 2006

Stakeholder	Current Position	Years in BNP	Education Background	Related Work Experience	Involvement with MPHIA	Level of MPHIA Accreditation Obtained
Operation Managers & Owners of Guiding Operations						
Bill	Owns Scenic Tour and Hiking Company	15	University Business Management and Science Degrees	Ski Industry	Little to no personal involvement	No Accreditation
Denise	Operation Manager for Japanese-based tour company	10	Unknown	Guide for Japanese-based tour company	Little to no personal involvement	No Accreditation
Calvin	Operation Manager for Scenic Tour and Hiking Company	25	Unknown	Japanese Tour Market	MPHIA Member Evaluator for Oral Component of the Standard and Professional Accreditation	Professional Accreditation
Mike	Owner of Horse Guiding Company	30	Unknown	Horse Guiding	Little to no personal involvement	No Accreditation
Management & Board Members of MPHIA						
Elaine	Parks Canada Communication Officer for the Banff Field Unit	8	University degree in History	Interpreter and Guide in both Public and Private Sectors	Board Member for MPHIA, Instructor for Interpretive Component for Standard Course	Professional Accreditation
Leslie	Destination Management Consultant	20	Unknown	Guide for Japanese-Based Tours	Board Member for MPHIA, Instructor for Japanese Basic and Standard Courses	Professional Accreditation
Nathan	MPHIA's Executive Director	5	Masters in Recreation Management	Interpretive Guiding and Programming in Both Public and Private Sectors	Executive Director of MPHIA for the past 2 years	Professional Accreditation

4.3.1. Frasier

Frasier had been living in the Bow Valley for six years and has worked as a scenic tour and hiking guide for the past three. When asked about his job he commented,

I feel proud of it. I feel good about saying this is what I do for a living. I like what I do. I think it is a good occupation. It is fun and I really enjoy meeting the people that we have on our trips. It is an international community of people who come to visit Banff.

Prior to working in the guiding industry Frasier worked within the forestry sector in the province of British Columbia. He has experience working as a ski, climbing, and mountain bike instructor. He has accredited levels with the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) and has an education background in forestry and renewable resource management. Prior to living in Banff he lived in a variety of mountain communities and has ample experience in the backcountry. Presently, Frasier is a member of MPHIA and has completed the Standard certification level. He has attended their annual general meetings but in the summer of 2006 was not interested in gaining or moving on towards the PI level. When asked what qualities were needed to be an effective guide he responded:

Ultimately it doesn't matter how much you know or how much information you've got but how genuine you are.

In the foreseeable future, Frasier plans on continuing in his role as a scenic and hiking guide in Banff. However, he is also interested in the possibility of working as a guide in different locations and is very open to the idea of working within the guiding industry in different capacities.

4.3.2. Hank

Hank is an angling guide and his company is based out of Banff National Park. Hank offers both fly-fishing and spin fishing trips on the Bow River east of the park gates. He has been living in the Banff area for over 15 years. When he first arrived in the Bow Valley, he started working in the hospitality industry taking on a variety of roles at restaurants, hotels and golf courses. He has experience working as a step-on guide which refers to a local guide being hired to step-on a large tour bus and deliver

commentary about the area. He has been running his own company for the past nine years and his guiding season runs from mid April to late October each year. His business has grown over the years and he plans on continuing to live and work in the Bow Valley.

When asked what he thought the meaning of interpretation was he replied:

Interpretation to me is giving meaning, translation and conveying information. Guests are not paying for interp [sic] service from fishing guides. I read the river. I guess I am interpreting the river.

He continued by explaining that he thought MPHIA's role was in "giving that basic knowledge to guides." Hank is not a member of MPHIA and in the summer of 2006 did not intend to take any courses offered by the organisation. Further, he stated that: "I am already exceeding that base knowledge (provided by MPHIA) as a fishing guide," and this belief may well underlie his reluctance to undertake further training through the Association.

4.3.3. Ingrid

Ingrid has been working in the Rocky Mountain Parks for the past eight years. At present, she works for Parks Canada as an interpreter for the summer season and for private guiding companies in the winter months. Ingrid began working in the National Parks at a private information center in Kootenay and, subsequently, she has accumulated experience in a broad spectrum of interpretation roles. Ingrid explained why she enjoyed working as an interpreter in the National Park system

I like to feel that I am making some kind of contribution. I could be a tour guide in the city. I could do other things but part of the attraction here is you feel like you are contributing to something more than just the tourism industry. That you have a purpose in it!

Ingrid speaks a variety of languages and has a university degree in French, Philosophy and Drama. She sees herself working in the guiding industry for at least the next few years. Ingrid is a member of MPHIA and has been accredited as a PI. She enjoyed the courses that she took through the organisation and would like to see more guides in the park take the time to become accredited.

4.3.4. Jim

Jim has been living in the Bow Valley for the past 10 years. He spent the last 8 years working as a guide for a Japanese tour company. In this role, he takes Japanese visitors on nature walks and day hikes throughout the Rocky Mountain Parks. He is also involved with volunteer interpretive guiding programs including spring bird walks for local enthusiasts. He has a true passion for being a guide. He commented:

When I am guiding people I feel lucky. I enjoy the beauty of the wild flower(s), mountain(s), lakes or bird singing... This is my office: Lake O'Hara, Wilcox Pass and Sunshine Meadow, such beauty! My biggest motivation when I am guiding people on day hikes is making connections between the wilderness outside and the wilderness inside of people.

After graduating from high school in Japan, Jim spent one year working and learning at the Outward Bound School in the United States. Jim is well traveled and has spent considerable time hiking and back packing throughout the United States, Northern Canada, Pakistan, and Japan. He spent two winters working as a musher for a dog sledding company in the Bow Valley before becoming a hiking guide in Banff. Jim is presently an active member of MPHIA and gets involved with the field trips that are offered throughout the year. He is also accredited as a PI through MPHIA. Jim took the written exam and the presentation exam in Japanese but his personal challenge is to pass both tests in English within the next year.

4.3.5. Gary

Gary has been working as a scenic and hiking guide for the past three years in Banff. He has experience working in the guiding industry across Canada as well as in Australia. In the past, he has spent considerable time working with canoeing, back-country camping and dog-sledding tour companies in the province of Quebec. Gary's first language is French but he delivers most of his scenic and hiking tours in English. He explained the importance of interpretation and how it fit into his role as a guide:

Eighty percent of guests are keen to learn things. That is why they are taking our tours. They just don't want to hop into the bus for a little while and be entertained. To show my appreciation for this place... to show how great this place is and to show how important it is, you have to have enthusiasm and you have to pass that passion on to your guests.

Gary completed an ecotourism technical college program which gave him training in many outdoor skills. Gary is a member of MPHIA and he has taken both their professional and group management courses. At present, Gary is not PI accredited but does plan on challenging the exams in the near future. He anticipates working as a hiking and scenic guide in Banff for three more years and then pursuing other interests.

4.3.6. Kevin

Kevin has been living in Banff for seven years and works in the horse guiding business. From breaking in new horses, through giving 'saddle tests' to potential guides, to taking visitors on overnight and week-long, horseback riding trips he is involved with all aspects of the business. Kevin is a Lead Farrier for a horseback riding company in Banff and is certified by Parks Canada as having Horse Level 2 which allows him to lead guests on back country trips. Kevin has worked for horse and cattle operations in various parts of western Canada. He commented on why he really enjoys working out of Banff:

One of the great things about working for this crew is that we are a teaching outfit. I learn something new everyday. Whether it is about people or myself or about the horses and mules I am working with. I am always expanding my knowledge. You also got some of the greatest scenery in the world. This is our backyard. You think the Bow Valley is nice, wait till you see the Cascade or Allan Bee Pass.

Kevin has been trained through work experience and through an Advanced Farrier and an Agriculture Technology college program. He has not taken any courses through MPHIA and is not involved in any aspect of the organization and prior to being interviewed had heard very little about its existence.

4.3.7. Andy

Andy has been working in the Rocky Mountain Parks for the past 25 years. Prior to arriving in the Bow Valley he obtained his Masters in Environmental Studies. He began his career in interpretive guiding with Parks Canada in the early 1980's. For the past twenty years, he has been working in the private guiding industry in Banff. Andy is accredited by MPHIA as one of only six Master Level Interpreters in the Rocky Mountain Parks. When asked, what are three words that describe what is needed to be a strong interpreter, he replied:

One word that comes to mind is to "facilitate." I don't see myself as giving people something necessarily as making it happen for them... So facilitating how people interact with the environment. "Experience" is another one and I think it is [an] important word to think about how people are experiencing the landscape. I think as an interpreter it is my job to use all the senses and make sure... that [guests on his tours] are feeling nature as much as looking at it and moving on to the next thing. "Fun" is the other word that comes to mind. It is really important for me that people have fun and that is not necessarily telling jokes and getting them to laugh. But making sure it is a pleasant nature experience, [if not], they are never coming back. If I could add a fourth the other thing that is important to me is a good foundation, an incredible knowledge of the landscape, and the ability to present that to people.

When not guiding, Andy is an environmental consultant conducting small-scale environmental impact assessments throughout the Bow Valley and the Canadian Rockies. He also sits on a national committee advising the Minister of the Environment on the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Andy is actively involved with the MPHIA in teaching courses for both the Standard and Professional levels of the program, and through the leading of educational field trips for the association's members. He also assisted in writing the exam that is used for the testing at the Professional level.

4.3.8. Bill

Bill owns and manages a scenic tour guiding company based in Banff National Park. He has been living in the Bow Valley for over 15 years and his business has continued to expand in size since its creation. Prior to working in the guiding industry, he was involved in the ski industry. His company offers year-round tours that consist of both sightseeing opportunities and day-hiking trips for the frequent independent traveler (FIT) market. His company employs over 30 staff and he has more than a dozen

guides working for him in both the winter and summer seasons. When Bill was asked what he looks for when hiring staff, he replied: “Personality, that’s about it. Everything else you can learn.”

Bill’s company offers a variety of sightseeing tours including viewing wildlife, visiting Lake Louise, and traveling to the Columbia Icefield. His trips are conducted in English with a maximum of 24 participants on his sightseeing trips and 12 guests on his hiking or snowshoeing adventures respectively. The company offers five package tours daily and also conducts private and customized tours. Bill’s company pays membership dues to MPHIA and many of his guides are accredited by the organisation. The guides that have the PI level of accreditation are compensated with a higher hourly wage. He explained that he likes to recognize the guides who are making a commitment and staying in the industry.

4.3.9. Denise

Denise is an Operations Manager for a Japanese-based tour company. Her company provides services for Japanese guests while they are visiting Alberta and the Canadian Rockies. It looks after all aspects of the guests’ trip, from airport arrivals and departures through hotel reservations, to restaurant bookings and provides bus sightseeing trips, and hiking adventures. Denise has been in the Banff area for over ten years and has over 20 years of working experience with the Japanese tour market both in Canada and Japan. She is involved with the hiring and training of the company’s eight tour guides who work directly for her company. She explained that when hiring guides, she looks for:

common sense and their personality because everyone who comes here to be a tour guide, they will have to study the knowledge of the mountain.

Her company preferentially employs hiking guides who have already obtained MPHIA training and accreditation. Her company has a corporate membership with MPHIA and she has attended the annual general meetings.

4.3.10. Calvin

Calvin is the operations manager for a scenic bus tour company based out of Banff National Park. Calvin has been living in the Bow Valley for the past 25 years. He is involved with the day-to-day operations of the guiding business. He hires, selects and trains between 12-15 guides each guiding season. He explained his role within his company:

As the operations manager, I am there before or either at the same time that all the guides arrive [at work] to start their day. I assist them in putting together their pick-up list and getting all of their equipment ready and their busses sorted out. I am the main contact person for the guides themselves, so I don't only hire them but I evaluate them and I am also the guy that all the communication goes back and forth through.

The company he works for offers year-round scenic bus tours. It provides both day hiking trips throughout the summer and ice walks throughout the winter months. Prior to his work in the private sector he worked for both national and provincial parks. As a staff trainer for Parks Canada, Calvin was involved with delivering programs to new front line staff within Banff National Park. Calvin sat on the board of directors for MPHIA for a two year term. He is involved presently with evaluating presentations that are delivered by guides challenging for PI level of accreditation through MPHIA.

4.3.11. Mike

Mike owns a horse guiding outfitting company in the Rocky Mountain Parks. Mike has been working in the horse guiding business for over 30 years. Mike's outfit has slowly expanded over time and his business offers a variety of guided trips from one-hour trail rides to overnight excursions to multi-day riding trips. Throughout the summer season his company operates both backcountry lodges and semi-permanent tent camps. Employing over seventy-five staff of which fifty are trail guides Mike oversees all aspects of his business including the hiring and training of his staff. He explained:

we usually try to hire farm ranch kids [who] have some background with some animals and horses... Hospitality is a big side of our staff training but also safety. It is important that we hire people that are knowledgeable about horses and have grown up with it. It is much easier for them to be good guides.

Mike was involved with the initial discussions in the 1990's on creating stronger staff training for guides working in the park but in 2006, neither he nor his staff was involved with the MPHIA.

4.3.12. Elaine

Elaine works as one of the communication officers for Banff National Park and is involved with heritage presentation and visitor services. Her role involves overseeing the interpretive programs for the Banff field unit. She has been living within the Rocky Mountain Parks for the past 8 years and has experience in interpretation in both the private and government sector. Presently, Elaine is involved with the hiring and training of Banff National Park interpreters. When Elaine was asked what quality is needed to be an effective interpreter, she commented:

I would say the number one thing is passion. They want to connect the person and make things relevant. To get people excited about the park and not only in knowing about the park but [instilling the concept of] stewardship. If you make someone excited, if you create that caring, they become a person who is going to look after the park and will teach their kids how important parks are.

Elaine became accredited by MPHIA as a Professional Interpreter in 2001 and since that time has become actively involved with their programs. Presently Elaine sits on the board of directors for MPHIA. She also delivers the 'Banff Best' program on behalf of MPHIA and teaches the section on Park Management Strategies for the Standard level courses.

4.3.13. Leslie

Leslie has been living in the Bow Valley for the past twenty years. Throughout that time she has worked as a ski instructor, within hotel management, and in a variety of tour guiding positions. For 10 years Leslie worked for a Japanese tour guiding company that offered multi-day trips throughout Canada. Now she works as a destination management consultant (DMC) working independently as a guide and hospitality representative for a variety of corporate groups visiting Banff National Park. She became accredited as a PI through MPHIA in 2001. She presently teaches the Japanese courses that are

offered through MPHIA. Leslie is also involved with the presentation examinations for Japanese students. She also is an executive board member for MPHIA. As she explained:

right now, I am one of the board members of MPHIA and so I am basically doing everything that is regarding Japanese language or Japanese guiding.

4.3.14. Nathan

Nathan has worked for the executive of MPHIA since 2004. Nathan has experience as a canoe and river float guide as well as, a cross-country ski and hiking guide. He has also been involved with presenting evening interpretation theater shows. Nathan completed a Masters in Recreation Management where he studied the role of presenting environmental history within interpretation programs at Dinosaur Provincial Park. Nathan works closely with the Board of Directors for MPHIA and has seen the implementation of the Group Management course offered by MPHIA as well as, the introduction of the Standard and Basic courses. He spends considerable amount of time helping prepare students for both the written and oral exams for the Standard and Professional accreditation levels. Nathan envisions MPHIA as the hub of a guiding community of learning.

4.4. MPHIA's Program Offerings 2006

Exploring the data collected from personal interviews with members of the guiding community in Banff National Park in the summer of 2006 aided in constructing a base of understanding about the perceptions of MPHIA and the concept of accreditation for interpretive guides. But what exactly is MPHIA? On the opening page of the organisations website (www.mphia.org), MPHIA describes itself under the heading 'Who We Are' as a:

professional association dedicated to improving the quality of information delivery to visitors of Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks. (MPHIA, 2007. home-page)

MPHIA further describes itself as an educational, not-for-profit organisation that aims to foster a healthy learning community within its own membership and partners. As explained by Nathan, an executive member of MPHIA:

the focus of all the stuff that we do is all about training... So, the big thing we are offering and the big raison d'être for MPHIA is to be able to offer these courses and provide the accreditations.

MPHIA has developed a portfolio of education services since its inception in the Rocky Mountain guiding community in 1998. In Banff, in 2006, MPHIA was offering five separate courses: 'Banff's Best,' the "Basic," "Standard," "Professional Interpreter," and "Group Management." MPHIA offers interpretive guide training courses for the four Canadian, Rocky Mountain Parks (Banff, Kootenay, Jasper and Yoho) and was in the process of developing programs for two other western Canadian National Parks in the summer of 2006. Given the focus of this research on the Banff Guiding community's perceptions of MPHIA, I chose to only examine the programs offered by MPHIA that target the Banff community.

Each of the courses offered by MPHIA for Banff is unique in its program content and has been designed to be delivered to specific target audiences. All MPHIA's courses, with the exception of the Professional Interpreter (PI) course, are presently offered in both English and Japanese. MPHIA is also responsible for evaluating guides who are interested in becoming accredited as a PI. To gain an understanding of what programs MPHIA offers in 2006, Table 4.2 is a reference. This is followed by Table 4.3 aimed to present a visual perspective on the courses MPHIA has offered and the variation in participants in each course target market.

Table 4.2. MPHIA's Program Offerings in 2006

	Banff's Best	Basic Level	Standard Level Certification	Professional Level Accreditation	Group Management Course
What	An orientation to Parks heritage, attractions, safe/ appropriate behavior in mtn. landscape.	Overview of the heritage of BNP, and the guides role	Introduction to regional geography, ecology, human history, Park Management, the art of interpretation	Covering heritage interpretation elements outlined in Standard Level however at greater depth and detail	Overview of group management skills: proper pace making, risk management, trip management
Why	For front line staff to be good ambassadors of Banff	Developing the importance of guides presenting and protecting BNP heritage	To create an apprenticeship level towards the PI. To help encourage quality of information delivery to visitors of BNP	To help encourage quality of information delivery to visitors of BNP To create a 'profession'	To encourage safety in guiding in BNP
Who	Anyone who works in Banff's Tourism Industry	Activity Guides(i.e. angling, climbing, rafting, horse back)	Guides who hold interpretive day hiking license	Guides who hold an interpretive day hiking license	For guides who hold interpretive day hiking license who are not ACMG day hiking, or backpacking certified
Where	In class	In class and on-line	In class	In class and Field trips	In class and outdoor component
Time	2 hours	4 hour (in class)	16 hour (2 day course)	40 hours (offered as one week course or as multiple evening classes)	8 hour (1day course)
Cost	Free for participants	\$30 per person	\$238	\$348 –class \$53-to take exams	\$73
Exam	No exams	No exams	In Class Assignments and tests	Oral presentations and written exams	No exams
By	Delivered by MPHIA paid for by the Banff Heritage Tourism Council	Delivered by MPHIA taught by PI Instructors	Delivered by MPHIA taught by PI Instructors	Delivered by MPHIA Taught by Master level Instructors	Delivered by MPHIA taught by ACMG instructors

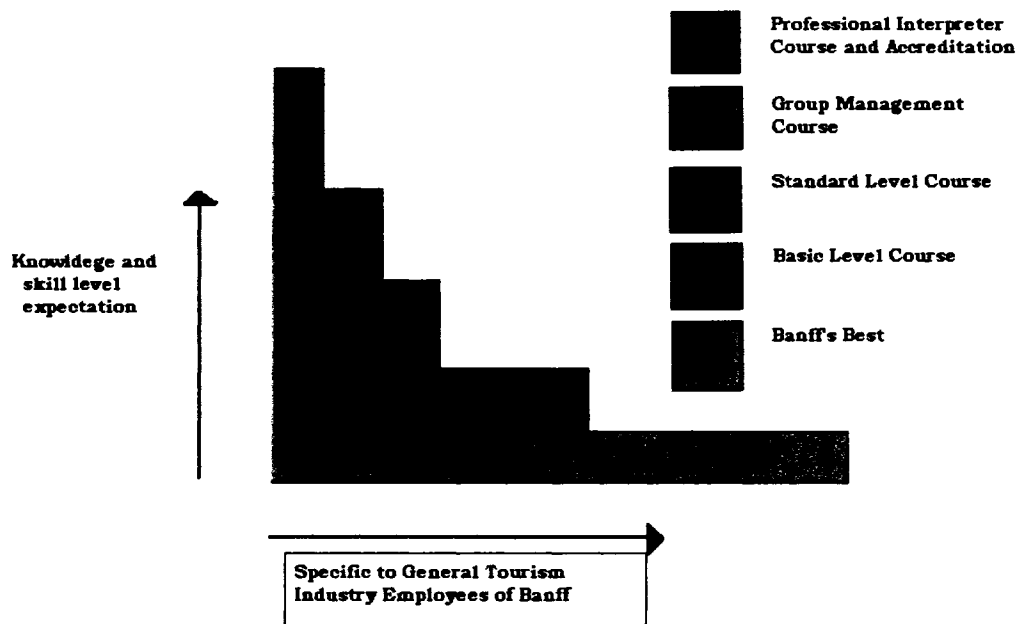


Figure 4.2. Visual Reflection of MPHIA's Programs and Target Market of Participants in 2006

In 2006, MPHIA delivered a variety of courses and programs in Banff. The two-hour 'Banff's Best' introductory class targets all new members of the community working in the tourism industry to learn about Banff. The PI course in comparison has been designed to train and raise the knowledge standards of interpretive hiking guides working in the park. MPHIA, nine years after its creation in BNP, is still an emerging organisation that is striving to reach its mission of improving the quality of information delivery to visitors to Canada's Mountain Parks (MPHIA, 2007).

Through a comprehensive review of the Association's website, three major themes became evident: educational programming; the regulation of the accreditation standards; and finally, the relationships the organisation has developed with its partners and its own membership. I used these three themes as a basis for the analyses of the interviews conducted in Banff. However, it became clear from the interviews that in order to examine the guiding community's perceptions of MPHIA, it was also necessary to reflect on the history of the organisation and its development in Banff and the Rocky

Mountain National Parks. Thus, the results of this descriptive case study are viewed through an exploration of MPHIA as it was viewed in 2006 and also through the examination of MPHIA's past.

4.5. Educational Programming

4.5.1. Historical Context and the Formation of MPHIA

The formation of MPHIA and the overall vision of having guides who are working in the Rocky Mountain National Parks with a standard of substantive knowledge and effective communication skills was the reason behind the development of the organisation. The timing is believed to be related to cutbacks to Parks Canada interpretive programs in the mid 1980's. Nathan commented:

When I talk about the history of MPHIA, one of the things that is missing out of my summary and people want to make sure they hear it in there... is that Parks Canada cut back on the amount of interpretation they were doing in the mid 1980's.

For Andy, this was also an important event because it initiated his movement from the public to the private sector:

I left Parks Canada because of the budget cuts in the 1980's when the government said, "We are not doing guided walks anymore. We can't afford it. The private sector should do that"... A bunch of us, who were in the public sector said, "Okay we will become the private sector."

As the private interpretation sector started to develop in Banff National Park, concern for the quality of the guided programs being offered to visitors by guiding businesses began to be expressed in the community. Andy reflected on this time:

(Parks Canada) suddenly realized... we have no idea who these people are, what they are doing, what skills they have and what qualifications and insurance they have.

These issues and others in regards to the concern of ecological integrity and visitor impact on the unique Rocky Mountain landscape influenced the Minister of Canadian Heritage to initiate the 1994 Bow Valley Study (BBVS). A five-person task force with backgrounds in the fields of environmental science, tourism, policy making and management was brought together to assess the overall health of Banff National Park. From this assessment came over 400 recommendations to guide the overall mandate of Parks Canada (BBVS, 1996). In regard to guided interpretive services, the BBVS noted that

there was a wide range in quality and accuracy of information being communicated to visitors at all levels in the park and that there were no defined common standards for interpretive content, accuracy or appropriate delivery (BBVS, 1996).

Nathan recalled the importance of the BBVS and its impact on the creation of MPHIA

The Bow Valley Study actually mentioned that the quality of guiding was really varied in the park. So, you could go out with some people [guides] and you would have a really high quality experience with really accurate information and it was really good and sometimes you would go out with people and the experience would be really bad. People would be filled with lots of misinformation, really poor professionalism and lots of arrogance, so they said this is a problem you need to fix it.

To address these concerns, it was suggested by the BBVS that an organisation be created that would establish and maintain standards for interpretive guiding in the Banff-Bow Valley. This recommendation helped to initiate the development of the Heritage Tourism Strategy (HTS).

The HTS was a local advisory board (made up of senior Parks Canada managers, representatives from the town of Banff, and members of the Banff Lake Louise tourism board, the Banff Center, museums and hotel associations) that would address the recommendations of the BBVS and help create a tourism strategy that would meet the needs of ecological integrity in regards to tourism development. Two key strategies of the HTS encouraged development of opportunities, products, and services consistent with heritage values, and the strengthening of employee orientation, training and accreditation programming as it related to sharing heritage understanding with visitors (Heritage Tourism Strategy, 2006). Andy recalled the Banff Bow Valley Study and the 1990's by stating

This is when the term Heritage Tourism got incorporated as a way of trying to blend this massive tourism industry with the National Park values that it was making money from

According to Nathan there arose:

...a discussion... headed by Bob Sanford [a local historian and current Master Interpreter]. ... What he did was put a question to the guiding community. Essentially he said, "Do you or do you not think that it would be a good idea to have an organisation that would oversee and set standards for interpretation in the parks?"

The answer to this question by Parks Canada and the Banff guiding community was unanimously affirmative. The agreement according to Nathan was based on the idea that:

We need to have some kind of body (so) that the quality of the guiding here remains strong.... People didn't agree on how that looked but they agreed that something had to be done. So, when I say that everybody agreed, they agreed that yes we need a body to do this, but they didn't agree on who would run it and they didn't agree on how it would look.

Some of the challenges MPHIA had been dealing with in 2006 about regulation and the guiding community becoming engaged with MPHIA's programs may stem partly from this initial lack of agreement on the structure of the organisation. Nonetheless, with the entry of the HTS into the Banff community came the creation of the MPHIA and also the need to develop the first set of knowledge standards deemed necessary for guides to be accredited as a PI. The original development of the knowledge standards for the PI accreditation also determined the layout and structure for the Professional Level course, which was the first program offered by MPHIA.

4.5.2. The Development of Knowledge Standards

The knowledge standards were created in collaboration with Parks Canada and the Banff Guiding Community. The board, which included a variety of Banff guiding and tourism operation owners, determined what was considered important to know if you were a guide in the Rocky Mountain National Parks. According to Nathan,

The big guiding outfits were in on the ground level to get MPHIA started and apparently they essentially asked people, "What should people know if there are going to be guides?" And out of that came the first set of knowledge standards.

As Nathan explained, the idea behind the development of the board was that:

It would be representative of the guiding community. So, everybody who was on there was part of the guiding community... The guiding community essentially would have its say on what they wanted in there... It would come from ... the ground up.

Thus, the knowledge standards were developed originally by the guiding community. Parks Canada was represented on the board but they were given no precedence in determining the important knowledge or skills required of an interpretive guide working in the park.

Parks Canada was involved in setting those standards but it was involved as a voting member on the MPHIA board. Just as all of the other companies were voting members on the MPHIA board (Nathan).

4.5.3. The Introduction of the Professional Interpreter (PI) Course

The PI course was the first of five courses to be developed and administered through MPHIA. The target audience for this course were interpretive day hiking and snowshoeing guides. Nathan explained that MPHIA started with the Professional Level course and the hope was that the Professional Level course would be the base. Part of that reasoning was related to the background experience of the guides who first took the course. Many of them had been working in the Rocky Mountain Parks for a number of years and had considerable experience and knowledge of the landscape. This created an obvious dilemma for the Board:

They (the MPHIA board) wrestled through “do we or do we not grandfather people in?”
(Andy)

The Board decided that there would be no grandfathering of seasoned or veteran guides:

Because you can’t have a standard set if you just have people grandfathered for the amount of time that they have been guiding, because they could have been guiding poorly for twenty years. (Nathan)

The initiation of MPHIA’s accreditation program was not perceived as positive by all members of the guiding community. As a guide working in the park in the late 1990’s stated,

No one likes to jump through hoops and I think it is just human nature, especially for the ones who have been working here for a long time. For somebody to challenge your credibility and the job that you have been doing; that is a bit of an ego hit. (Andy)

The decision to introduce the PI course and accreditation had been taken by the Board, however, and

was supported generally. In recognition of the level of knowledge of those active in the Banff guiding community,

the course they initially put together was not an entry level course...it had to be something higher. (Nathan)

The hope was initially that the PI course would be the minimum standard that people would need for working as an interpretive guide in the park. However, the reality was that many participants found the PI course to be too advanced.

I did my Professional Interpreter certificate in 2002... Anyways, years before I did it, it seemed like a pretty high level to me... It took me four and half hours to write the exam and I felt we needed a lower level. (Nathan)

Elaine, a board member of MPHIA and a Parks Canada Communications Officer also found the PI level to be “intimidating.” This sentiment was expressed commonly by the guides interviewed in 2006. For example, Jim, a Japanese hiking guide noted:

No matter what education is behind... still it is a big challenge to be Professional Interpreter... requiring such a high standard only certain people will actually reach the goal.

4.5.4. The Entry of the Standard Level Course

These perceptions of the difficulty of the PI level led to a sense within the guiding community that there was a need to develop lower level knowledge standards for courses and more accreditation levels. At first, MPHIA was slow to respond:

MPHIA kept plugging along for most of its existence with one level and plenty of people getting upset because that level wasn't satisfying a lot of their needs and there was nothing for people at lower levels. And there was no change that people were seeing either. So I think a lot of people assumed the organisation was just going to die. (Nathan)

The idea behind developing different levels in regards to accreditation and knowledge standards of interpretive guides was certainly being discussed long before they were introduced in 2005. According to Calvin a past board member of MPHIA,

The different levels, it was something we discussed right at the start... They basically needed to create an apprenticeship program.

In 2005, MPHIA finally did respond by introducing lower level accreditation courses. The Standard (Apprentice) course was developed for hiking and snowshoeing guides that were new to the industry, to allow them to gain the knowledge needed to deliver interpretive messages to visitors to Banff. Nathan explained this program in this way:

People can come in green... They get at least a leg up in the right direction... They can go work... then they go and get their experience... sort of an apprenticeship... learning from people who they are with and learning by getting out there and they then can come in and do the Professional afterwards.

4.5.5. Differences Between the Standard and the Professional Level

In order to develop two separate courses that complemented each other, there was a need to differentiate the skills and knowledge requirements at each of the Professional and Standard Interpreter levels.

There needed to be a really clear line up of these knowledge standards and a flow that you could see going from more basic information to more complex knowledge. (Nathan)

And so the courses arose:

...out of consultation with instructors...brainstorming sessions and the experience of what's working and what's not and looking at the end game... If we take a Professional Interpreter, what does he or she look like, what are they able to accomplish, what are they able to do, what kind of skills do they have, what do they know? (Nathan)

Nathan continued by describing what was envisioned as a PI in the Rocky Mountain Parks:

The Professional Interpreter needs to be able to inspire people that come to the park to care about them... so we are getting out of just information building and more into the realm of true interpretation.

Coming to agreement on the vision of what knowledge and interpretation skills a PI should have helped determine what needed to be taught in both the Standard and Professional courses. The knowledge standards to be a PI are seen by some as more appropriate for individuals who are interested in a career in interpretation:

The professional level in my mind is somebody who has made the choice to make it their life's work. (Elaine)

Andy, who is one of the instructors of MPHIA's courses, reinforced Elaine's comments in the way he described the approach to be taken in the Professional Course:

We are getting people more involved rather than just sitting in a classroom and reading through the notes and being able to regurgitate it back. We want people at the professional level to be involved in the course the same way we expect them to be involved in a career of interpretation.

Nathan used the topic of geological processes to help explain the differences in content, approach and outcomes in the Professional as compared to the Standard level:

At the Standard level, we are going to describe what glaciation is, we are going to talk about frost shattering ... And then at the Professional Level ... we are going to talk about how this has influenced the landscape through time and how it influences the experiences of visitors that are here. So we see the Professional Level starting to get more into making sure that stuff has a direct connection to people's experience.

The perception of those interviewed in the summer of 2006 indicated that the classes were successful and the training was of value to the guiding community. The knowledge standards associated with both courses were perceived to be relevant and beneficial to those who participated. Bill, an operation owner for a hiking and scenic tour company, stated,

MPHIA (provides) a good broad training; a good foundation for the guides. So, if they are coming and they don't have the MPHIA training we encourage them to sign up for the MPHIA course.

4.5.6. The Professional Interpreter Accreditation

For a guiding business to be licensed to operate in the National Park, Parks Canada's expectation is that two-thirds of a hiking company's guiding staff should be accredited at the PI level and the remaining one-third will have the Standard Level of certification. The Standard Level is obtained by sitting through the course and taking in-class tests. The PI accreditation is a much more involved process. The PI level is based on an assessment of guiding experience, knowledge and presentation skills. Only individuals with the required experience are able to take the accreditation exams (MPHIA, 2006). (Refer to Appendix F, for MPHIA's point system reflecting the qualifications needed to be labeled a Professional

Interpreter.) Applicants must score 70 per cent or higher on both the oral and written exam to become fully accredited. The significance of becoming PI accredited was noted by the individual guides:

The only thing we know is that we have to go through the accreditation to do the exam and if we don't pass well we are not, we still have to do that otherwise we have that dark cloud floating on top of us. (Gary)

Initially when I was getting into guiding I felt that there was some pressure, you know, if you want to work in Banff, you have to go through this program. You have to be qualified by MPHIA. That is why I pursued it. (Frasier)

Individual guides noted that having MPHIA accreditation made them more employable in the Banff guiding industry, gained them stronger job security and, in certain instances, resulted in them being paid a higher hourly wage.

MPHIA accreditation is the first form of quality assurance that has been implemented as a result of the Heritage Tourism Strategy to help ensure the level of interpretation being delivered by guides working in Banff National Park. The PI course is specifically designed to prepare individuals to take the examinations. Undertaking the course is not a requirement to gain accreditation individuals do have the option (if they have enough experience based on the point system) to become certified by just challenging the exams. As explained:

In the past, most people didn't take the course because they were guides who were already operating and they came in and said, "Okay, let's get this over with. Lets get this done"... Right up to 2001, I would say, the majority of people that were coming in were just challenging and not taking the course. After that, I think the majority of people are taking the course first. It is really rare to have somebody come in and just want to challenge. It is even rarer for those people to pass. (Nathan)

The examination comprises both oral and written components. The latter tests the individual's knowledge in subject areas such as geology of the Rocky Mountains. The oral exam consists of a five-minute presentation on a topic chosen by the participant and it is aimed at assessing the interpretation skills of the candidate.

Written Examination for PI Accreditation

The written examination is comprised of short and long answers and takes approximately two to three hours to complete. For those who had taken the written test, concerns were raised about the marking of the exam. A guide who was interviewed felt that there were discrepancies in the marking. He stated that in order to pass the exam, candidates had to answer from a MPHIA point of view. He noted that certain topics on the environment and ecosystems could be perceived through a variety of lenses, but if one wanted to pass the exam, they should not offer a different perspective than that of MPHIA and or Parks Canada, or it would be marked wrong:

We have to understand what MPHIA thinks, what they want us to answer... Sometimes some answers even MPHIA is not sure, they don't know the answer. Is it fair to test us by that way?

He referred to his experience as a hiking guide, seeing certain plants on different regions and locations than is noted in books or by MPHIA instructors. He also asserted that certain concepts are important to know in order to pass the written exam, and a guide could have plenty of knowledge, but if he or she had not studied specific topics, s/he will not become certified.

While the revision of the knowledge standards in 2006 helped differentiate between the Standard and the PI course, some also suggested that it may be worth reexamining the existing PI written test. This opinion was expressed by Andy who helped with the development of the first exam:

I teach the course.... I should sit down with the Executive Director and say, "Lets look at this exam and let's do it again."

Oral Examination for PI Accreditation

As explained by the MPHIA website, candidates must be prepared to give a five-minute interpretive presentation on a natural or cultural heritage topic suitable for a general audience. The oral exam is not about testing the individual's depth of knowledge on a particular subject, but on their presentation abilities. Calvin, a judge for the oral presentation, shared his perception:

So the whole point is: can you give an interpretive vignette that is structured, focused, and timely? We examine with three examiners for everybody's presentation so there is a mix of people and a mix of opinion and measures.

In regards to the oral component of the examination process, there seems to be a general agreement that it is a valid and reliable way to test an individual's interpretive skills:

You can tell a lot in five minutes. If someone can't concisely put together a program with a beginning, middle and end on a theme in five minutes, they are not going to be able to do it in 2 hours either. (Nathan)

The oral examination has evolved since MPHIA's inception in 1998. Calvin explained that initially the fail rate was over 30 per cent for candidates who were taking the English oral examination for the first time:

It wasn't necessarily people who had never guided before... Sometimes it was people who had guided for five or six years. The standards or the fail rate was based on two things. One, MPHIA's standards at that time weren't completely realistic and the other one was... the examiners hadn't totally figured out what is the expectation.

One board member thought that in the early years of MPHIA, the opposite was occurring in the Japanese oral exams. She felt that there were too many guides passing the exams:

Back then the examiners, none of them were accredited... I actually saw the video, the record of the old examinees; many of them should not have passed.

Although there were challenges initially with the evaluation procedures, over time MPHIA's assessment process has become more consistent, valid and accurate.

It took a while, maybe a year or a year and half or so for the examiners to figure out, "Okay, this is what our expectations are. We understand what is being taught in the course and this is how we are going to examine it." [Now], it is a rare occasion when anyone of the three of us is more than 5 per cent off on our score with someone. (Calvin)

The selection of the judges for the oral examination was perceived by the MPHIA executive to be of the utmost importance. One of their concerns in such a small community is to ensure that there is no conflict of interest on the part of any evaluator:

We have run into serious issues... with people working for a certain company, so X works at XY company, he sits on as an examiner and someone from AB company comes in and is getting tested. Is there a conflict of interest? Can X benefit from failing the guide from the AB company, will his company benefit? Those are the questions that were being asked and they

were really valid questions because eventually the answer is yes. That is problematic. So when we pick our evaluators we try to pick people that don't run other companies.

MPHIA being aware of these potential issues and working through the oral examination's initial challenges has helped to develop measurement standards that are perceived in 2006 as being reliable. These initial challenges, however, may have contributed to the perceived credibility of MPHIA within the Banff community.

Perceptions on the Examination Format

Looking specifically at the written and oral examination as an appropriate way to test someone's skill to be labeled a PI, a variety of comments was made:

The exam's good. It does test your knowledge. I think it is appropriate but I think there are other ways to qualify guides as well. (Frasier)

You know maybe some people freeze on tests maybe some people freeze on evaluations and I appreciate that. But how else do you figure it out, how else do you find out if somebody can do the job or not? The only other thing that you can do is spend some time with them. And go out with them on a tour and hear how they conduct a tour. And maybe that is a good idea for some people who have problems with writing skills it doesn't mean that they don't know their stuff. (Ingrid)

I think we need to take people out into nature and identify things and be able to point to something in the landscape and explain what that is. I mean that takes a lot of time. So it is just not a feasible thing to do in our framework here. (Andy)

Though going out into the field to evaluate a guide's interpretation skills and substantive knowledge may be perceived as the most appropriate form of measurement the interviews suggested that there is acceptance from the guiding community of the practical limitations of both the oral and written examinations.

4.5.7. The Basic Course

Beyond the PI and Standard level courses, beginning in 2005, MPHIA also began to offer a Basic Course in interpretation. Attending the Basic Course is an expected requirement for river rafting, horse

packing, scuba, angling, climbing and cross country and ski touring guides who are working in the park. Nathan explained that MPHIA tries to “offer that (Basic) course regularly because there are so many people that are supposed to be taking it.” However, I noted through the interviews that certain guiding businesses had not yet become involved with this course. As Nathan explained, “The reality of who we are teaching this course to is primarily the ACMG mountain ski and rock guides.” Due to the small number of participants signing up for the course, the courses in Banff get cancelled “most of the time.” In response to this apparent lack of interest and in an attempt to make the course more accessible, MPHIA made the Basic course available on-line in May 2006.

Though there have been challenges in regards to the Basic course in terms of participation and local business support, what is interesting to note is that the opposite has occurred with MPHIA’s latest course offering called “Banff’s Best.” This course has been widely supported in the community and it was mentioned by many interviewees as a successful venture.

4.5.8. Banff’s Best

The “Banff’s Best” course is delivered by MPHIA on behalf of the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation (BHTC) and the funding for this particular program is equally supported by the town of Banff and Parks Canada. This two-hour course is free for any member of the Banff community to learn about the place in which they are living. According to one of MPHIA’s instructors, the Banff’s Best’ course is:

an orientation program for the newcomers to Banff. To orientate them to this special place. You are not just getting off the bus and coming to a new town, you are coming to a new environment. You are coming to a national park and a world heritage site.

Statements from two former participants reflect their experience with the course:

I think that was the first thing I took and I actually took it a couple of times. I thought it was really fun. It was fun it was fast it was good information. (Parks Canada Interpreter)

I took it years ago when I worked at a hotel and thought it was good. I really like the concept of having the front line staff aware of where they are. To try and get them seeing more of the big picture is appropriate for a place like Banff. (Hiking and Scenic Tour Guide)

Those interviewed also commented on the fact that many established businesses in Banff had supported the Banff's Best program and incorporated it into their staff training for new employees.

Ingrid made this statement in reference to the course:

I don't know how they have marketed it and I don't know how they have gotten some of the big players to come on board, but they have.

4.5.9. Japanese Courses

In 2006, Banff's Best, the Basic, Standard and Group Management courses were all offered in Japanese. The examination to become accredited as a Professional Interpreter is also able to be taken in Japanese. MPHIA's programs have encouraged the development of guide training for the Japanese community, which represents a large tourism market in the National Park. The importance of developing Japanese programming was noted by Andy:

I think it is really valuable. The Japanese, I think, is a tremendously nature-sensitized culture, a little bit more than our North American culture... And so, I think it is really important for those guides coming over here to develop that depth of knowledge with the landscape and be able to get it because, you know, working in English, we have all these resources at our fingertips but they don't have that.

It is evident that offering the training courses in Japanese is well appreciated. Denise, a Japanese based tour operation manager, explained the importance:

The first time they offered the course (in the late 90's), they only had (the) English course. So some of (the Japanese Guides) took the English course, but it was too difficult to understand (so) most of the courses (were) not attractive to the Japanese.

Leslie, an instructor for the Japanese courses, noted,

The content is the same. I basically translate it and (make small) cultural adjustments... The learning style of Japanese is different from North America... Japanese people hardly participate in the course. Ever since we were small, we were told to just shut up and listen.

She believed that many members of the Japanese guide community initially were reluctant to take the course:

But once the course starts, they all of a sudden realize that since it is a Japanese course, they can understand. They really get into it. They show interest.

The offering of classes in Japanese brought up discussions with those interviewed on the possibility of MPHIA offering programs in other languages. Denise commented:

Open the door for the person who speaks a different language for the Japanese, for the Korean, the German...because so many tour companies still do not know about MPHIA.

4.5.10. Offering MPHIA Training in French

Delivering MPHIA's courses in French was brought up by many of those interviewed. Gary gave his thoughts on offering MPHIA's programs in French, one of Canada's official languages. He stated,

That is a sensitive topic because they are doing it [offering courses] in Japanese. I know there are a lot of Japanese tours and it is understandable, but the exam, we should have the possibility to do the exam in French. That's for sure.

Nathan gave his perception:

We have had some questions about that [offering courses in other languages], specifically about French because this is dual language country. "Come on what's the problem, where is the French?" The issue that we have with that is most of the French people that we have coming here, their English is good enough that they can sit in the English course. The people whose French isn't good enough are in such small numbers, we have trouble justifying putting together a course. So who is going to show up to these things?

However the importance of offering programs in the National Park in both official languages was noted by Elaine, a communications officer for Parks Canada:

It is our dedication to Canadians to have programs in French and English

Gary, whose first language is French, stated,

I know my vocabulary is not excellent but when I started it was not easy... There are some guides that I work with, their English, they have a huge accent and their vocabulary and syntax is not that good so maybe [for] these people, it would be easier for them to do it in French and then over the years when they get better in English. But they know all that stuff already, you know, so I think it is the same as the Japanese, their exam is in Japanese so for me why can't we have that too?

Nathan, on the other hand, continued to explain MPHIA's view on offering the courses in French as being:

not a high priority at this point. No, we have other things that we need to deal with and if there was a huge demand if there was a big population that was saying this was unfair, you can bet

we would go to Parks Canada and say, “We need money for this. Help.” But at the moment as an organization, we are just not seeing it. Where is the demand? Where are the people? And who is going to teach it? That is the other problem: you can create it but running it and translating it into French, that is probably a good idea but we would need to get money from Parks.

4.5.11. Reluctance to Training

Looking at MPHIA’s overall educational programs it can be noted that although there are some concerns, the overall perception is that they are good. From the interviews I conducted, it was evident that there is a continuing belief among many, at all levels in the guiding community, that having knowledge standards for guides working in Banff National Park is important and needed. However, I also gained the impression from those interviewed that there was still a reluctance within the community to get involved with MPHIA’s services.

Calvin who envisioned MPHIA’s mission as:

developing and creating training programs which are appropriate for a variety of levels of staff in the park

commented that:

The course material itself has reached the goal. But the number of people they are training has not been reached. And that’s where the clash comes into play ... So they are achieving some of their goals but they are not achieving, I guess, what the goals are of Parks Canada that there will be at least (a certain) number of guides out there who are trained and available to work.

Reluctance to be involved in the training programs was noted throughout conversations with both individual guides and operation managers. When asked if he would pursue further accreditation to become a PI, Frasier, a Standard level guide replied:

For me...a lot of that accreditation is just specific to the Park... For me, if I am looking for accreditation I am going to go beyond what MPHIA offers...Outside the Banff area it doesn’t really qualify you for anything... It gives you a lot of good techniques on how to present information but.... (MPHIA) cannot qualify me to be good driver...They can’t qualify me with first-aid or confident hiking and you know experience. My experience as a hiking guide comes from years hiking through this landscape and MPHIA cannot qualify me for that.

This critique was echoed by other guides interviewed, but for different reasons. For example, Hank, an angling guide, just was not interested in class work:

Classes? No, I already have it pegged. I already make good tips which I recognize as [demonstration that] the service is good. Go to school? No, not interested.

Others seemed to find the coercion involved undesirable:

They are not happy obviously...Many of them don't care about learning but they are forced to take the course. (Leslie)

A similar reluctance was expressed by the operators who were asked if they encouraged their staff to take the MPHIA courses. Their responses varied from ambivalence to downright denial. For example, one said, "Ah yes and no, only because it is requirement for us" and another said, "to be honest, no."

One operator explained:

So when you have some groups saying, "These are the things everybody needs to know whether you are a waitress, a helicopter guide, or you are out driving a boat. These are things you need to learn." I disagree with that... I see some people getting into a bit of a cottage industry where they come along and want to charge people a lot of money...Information is never wrong, education is always good...but you got a kid in here from Saskatchewan and he starts here in the middle of June, I think you should try to teach him the things that are most important for the field that he is in.

The resistance of the guiding community to be involved with MPHIA's programs has the potential to impact the number of participants taking courses and becoming accredited. Nathan expressed his frustration on this issue:

It baffles me that businesses think that it isn't a good idea to have a training course. I don't understand how it could hurt them in any way.

Guiding companies employing accredited guides is directly linked to Parks Canada's licensing requirements for companies operating in the Park. MPHIA's accreditation standards are a main criteria on which Parks Canada bases this decision. The effectiveness of this regulatory process and its enforcement are the topics of the next section.

4.6. Regulation and Enforcement of MPHIA's Accreditation and Knowledge Standards

4.6.1. MPHIA's Role in Regulation

MPHIA's management perceives its role to be educational and as Nathan explained, it is not MPHIA that is involved with the enforcement of the regulations. However, the role of MPHIA is often misconceived as regulatory and confused with that of Parks Canada. Many of those interviewed made comments reflecting this perception:

Requirements for guides in the park, I have gained that from snippets in the newspaper, more requirements for people to work in the park. (Hank)

Some people see it as being Parks Canada police on the trails. (Elaine)

But I am still wondering [about] their relationship with Parks Canada. How much the MPHIA is involved with the Parks Canada? How much Parks Canada is involved with the MPHIA organisation? Because sometimes they both said that is not my business... so you know there is a lot of grey area between them and we can't figure it out. (Denise)

To be sarcastic, the goal of MPHIA is to meet Parks Canada's direction. The frustration of that is that Parks Canada changes and flexes and sometimes it is not necessarily achievable. (Calvin)

It appears that, even though the reality is that Parks Canada is responsible for enforcement and licensing of guiding companies, MPHIA's role is inextricably linked to regulation in many people's minds. It may well be that part of the reluctance of the guiding community to become involved with MPHIA's courses and programs is related to resistance towards government regulation.

MPHIA is struggling with a lot of resistance... No one likes over-regulation. This is Alberta. It is a free-thinking society. We don't want excessive government regulation. So, MPHIA has had to struggle both with individuals, individual guides saying, "I have been working here for twenty years I don't need to bother with that" [and] businesses saying, "No, I have been here for a long time I don't need the government to tell me what my business is." (Andy)

Andy suggested that MPHIA needs to make clear how it perceives its role in relation to regulation:

I think it is up to MPHIA to say, "Just a minute, the reason why we want to regulate this is because it is what we do and we want to do it well. We owe it to this world heritage landscape

to be there and it gives people a better experience. It is good for business and it's what we do. It is not something we have to do. It is what we do." I think it gets perceived as "regulation," which I think is wrong. It is product development, if you want to look at in tourism terms.

Communicating the role of MPHIA's courses within the Banff guiding community is possibly one of the greatest challenges facing MPHIA . Specifying clearly its role in education, product development and improving the quality of the visitor experience may enhance the acceptability of and increase the participation in its course offerings The support for the Banff's Best program, for example, indicates that developing that support within the community is possible. In 2006 it would seem that Parks Canada's regulation of MPHIA's knowledge standards is the strongest inducement for community involvement with the organisation.

4.6.2. Hiking Guide Accreditation - Checking Procedures-

As previously mentioned, the checking procedures for MPHIA accreditation is enforced by Parks Canada. There are two specific ways Parks Canada enforces these standards. The first form of regulation is through the distribution of guide cards for the individuals working for guiding companies in the park. Business owners will apply for guide cards for their employees which state the individual's level of accreditation. Nathan explained:

The guide card will show: (a) that a company is licensed to operate in the park, and (b) that a guide has the requirements they need in order to be there. If any of those things are not in line, they don't get a guide's card.

In the past, according to Nathan, Parks Canada was not checking to see if the guides actually were accredited by MPHIA before administering the card. He stated,

There wasn't anything happening for quite some time. Parks Canada said, "This was the requirement, please do it"... We know they weren't checking because the business operator that was on the board said, "It was a piece of cake I submitted my stuff but no one asked me to prove it. Essentially I could make up what ever I wanted and get my guide cards."

In the summer of 2006, some interviews indicated that the checking of MPHIA accreditation standards by Parks Canada was taking place in regards to the issuing of the guide cards. As noted by this operations manager:

There is obviously no point in me applying for someone that doesn't have MPHIA training because they won't issue a card.

Nathan explained that when a company applies for their guide cards, an employee with Parks Canada compares each name with the list of accredited guides supplied by MPHIA. Guide cards will then be issued to all those guides who have met the requirements. Nathan stated in regards to the administration of the cards:

So that is the way the process is supposed to work. You know, there are still people who still sneak through. I don't know if she checks everybody or if she does a random check on the list. The point is at least she is checking so it is a huge improvement from a few years ago when nothing was happening. And it is a huge improvement from Jasper where nothing is still happening.

The second way in which MPHIA accreditation is enforced is through random checks of hiking guides on the trail by park wardens to see if they have been issued a guides card. Calvin explained,

If you were out there hiking and a Parks Canada warden walked up to you and said, "Where is your guide card" and you say, "I don't have one," they make a note of that and that gets sent down to the business licensing people.

Though these regulations and checking procedures were in place, when Bill an operations owner was asked if there was anyone enforcing these rules, whether someone was checking to see what guides were working for you, he responded, "No." Similarly, Leslie said,

At this point there is no policing system even with hiking guide. They are taking groups into the mountains without any accreditation. They don't get caught.

Nathan explained why the lack of enforcement by Parks Canada is problematic from his point of view:

Because we have got a whole bunch of people, we actually have 200 people that jumped through the hoops because you (Parks Canada) asked them to... Now that you are not enforcing it, they are feeling resentful because they have spent all this money and committed all this time to what they thought would be a good cause and you don't seem to care.

He continued to explain that a lot of the MPHIA executive's time was spent dealing with licensing issues:

A lot of time... trying to get Parks to enforce the licensing requirements that they have put in place and dealing with members who are really annoyed either that they exist or they are annoyed that they are not being enforced and that they have followed them.

Speaking in regards to enforcement and Parks Canada, he continued:

In Banff you need to follow through with what you say you are going to do. Otherwise, don't say it... You look uncommitted, you look like you don't care and it's a disaster for us as an organization because we cannot do anything, we do not enforce stuff.

Andy's view on the challenges involved with Parks Canada and regulation, went beyond perceiving the agency as uncommitted and related more to the difficulties of doing business in a small town. He commented,

There is a little bit of resistance in Parks Canada to be heavy-handed with its local community. So it's pretty complicated that way too. Telling your neighbour you have to be regulated.

The regulation of MPHIA's knowledge standards appeared in 2006 to be at the initial stages of implementation. Though certain licensing requirements have been put in place by Parks Canada, it was perceived by those interviewed that there was little pressure for the hiking guiding companies to follow them. The perception gained from the guiding community was that more could be done to ensure the quality of heritage interpretation in the park.

4.6.3. Beyond Hiking Guides

In the summer of 2006, the regulation of MPHIA accreditation that was expected to take place was focused on hiking guides. Comments raised by the guiding community showed concern that the knowledge standards, MPHIA training and accreditation was only being directed towards those leading hikes in the Rockies. Andy commented,

We still look at interpretive training from a guide perspective but you don't need to be trained to do exhibit work in the park, you don't need to be a certified interpreter... I look at interpretation and MPHIA as something that needs to expand beyond just someone on the trail. In fact someone on a bus doesn't even need to be trained... I mean, people guiding on coaches up and down the Icefield Parkway as an example, make contact with orders of magnitude more

than those of us who are out on a trail... So my vision for MPHIA is that they do finger out into all aspects of this tourism industry.

As Nathan explained,

Coach tours divers... are eluding Parks the most. There are no requirements to work as a bus tour guide in Banff National Park. Zero.

Many of those interviewed from the Banff Guiding community commented on the lack of regulation for step-on guides and the large coach tours that work in the park. Leslie explained,

But from my point of view, it is not hiking guides but step-on guides who really have to learn the appropriate things in the history, ecology and geology because hiking guides do interpretation on the way but they don't keep talking. Step-on driver guides, they are the ones who spread the bull.

Frasier explained his perception on the importance of having knowledge standards for step-on guides with this example:

When I was driving I had a step-on guide for this tour group that had come in from ... some other place. They come to Banff and their step-on guide, she was an American lady, pleasant enough, nice person, great personality, pretty much all her emphasis on her tour was where the good shopping was in Banff, what shops had what, and that Marilyn Monroe and such people had stayed in the Banff Springs Hotel . That was her heritage interpretation. And I think that's a bunch of crap, for example, who cares? Some people do, but to me that is such a minor part of what makes Banff special. Just to say Marilyn Monroe stayed here, well that's nice but you know if that is your bulk of your spiel for people who come to Banff, well... I would say it is wrong. It is the wrong thing to do. When we have these people come in those guides or interpreters definitely they should really know what makes Banff National Park special.

When Elaine was asked of her thoughts on the concept of bus guides becoming certified through MPHIA she stated,

Someone who is driving through our parks... giving education and teaching... Absolutely I think should have the standard level minimum... I think it definitely is a goal. I mean anyone who is communicating, who is considered a guide, whether a step-on guide or a driver guide should be at that level, should be receiving MPHIA training.

However, there is understanding that developing knowledge standards and accreditation requirements for the large tour bus operators and step-on guides would be difficult to regulate. Denise explained,

You know, we have lots and lots of people coming into Banff in the National Park and some companies based in Calgary. They don't have to know about the MPHIA license they just come in and bring the people on a day trip or sometimes they go to Lake Louise for the hiking. Of course they do not have the MPHIA license. So when we see that we feel that is not fair.

Bill spoke on the difficulties of enforcement:

When you think of... all those big bus companies who are coming in here and all have driver guides who are commenting in the park and speaking to way more people than hiking guides are. You try enforcing MPHIA on them. What are you going to do? Tell them they can't come in, tell them they can't speak? I mean, it is tough to enforce.

There is a belief that with the introduction of the Basic course and the on-line offering that there is a start in creating requirements in knowledge standards for step-on guides. Leslie stated,

But I can see gradually they are moving and that is why they created a much lower Basic course and regulation for the horseback riding and the rafting guide and things like that, and trying to gradually spread it.

4.6.4. Enforcement of the Basic Course

The requirement for guides in the park to take the Basic course is not perceived as being regulated by Parks Canada. Nathan commented that there were specific companies in the park that were not having their staff take the MPHIA Basic training course. He noted that this lack of enforcement by Parks Canada with particular businesses was an interesting situation in Banff. He explained,

They are an old establish business and they are part of what Parks Canada refers to as their "partners." [And though] it would be a big coup if they could get them to do what they wanted them to do, I don't think (Parks Canada) will have the balls to tell X or XY to get their shit together and do the training... So right now, essentially, they are operating illegally and Parks doesn't seem to care.

One operation owner who was interviewed referred to the first aid training, safety training, and heritage training that his staff received when they came to work for him. He explained that many of the components to his training were based on Parks Canada standards. And he made these comments in regards to Parks Canada's requirements to take the MPHIA's basic training course:

But if I said to the warden service or Parks... that if I send my guides my people to the MPHIA course that is all I need to do. They would say, "Oh no, no, no," they would not, they would not rubber stamp that.

He continued,

You know, if I said, "Okay, my people know it all, my people have taken the MPHIA course." They would say, "What do you mean, they know it all?"

In regards to who is being asked to take the Basic Training from MPHIA, Bill made this comment on the relevance of certain guiding positions specifically (horse and rafting guides) in the park taking the course:

Typically, [rafting and horse] guides, they don't have to give any commentary. They are providing a service. They are escorting people on horseback or paddling people down the river. They are not seen as tour guides. Whereas when you are on the bus or hiking, you are seen as a tour guide so there is an expected level of knowledge and interpretation. When I go rafting, I expect the guide to be friendly and nice and to get me down the river safe. The geology that comes out of his mouth is not my main priority. So obviously a lot of those guides feel the same way they're probably getting this thrown on them that they have to be MPHIA trained.

Andy made this point in regards to the resistance by the business community to get involved with the guiding regulations:

So I think a number of businesses have resisted it because it is just another thing that they have to worry about and it is just another regulatory finger in the pie.

The reluctance of the guiding community to get involved with MPHIA's courses may stem from private business' resentment of government regulation, or perhaps from the lack of community agreement on the structure of the organisation that was initially developed to ensure quality in the Banff guiding industry. The resistance of the guiding community has implications with Parks Canada and their ability to enforce MPHIA's knowledge standards.

4.6.5. Regulation: A Question of Policy or Honour

Looking at MPHIA's training courses and the hiking guide accreditations, there was confusion in the guiding community regarding whether Parks Canada's requirements were capable of being enforced by

law. Many of the operation owners who were interviewed commented on the lack of an overall policy in regards to MPHIA's knowledge standards. Calvin made a variety of comments regarding this topic:

The original direction that they started with was to certify hiking guides to reach a quota system of hiking guides. So 60 per cent of your hiking guides are supposed to be professionally trained or at the "enhanced" level and 30 per cent are supposed to be standard level. They have gotten to that point with Parks and I don't think it is regulation, I think it is just a policy that has come about: the whole idea of having trained staff. But what they haven't been able to do is figure out how a company actually gets to that point. The trouble is I don't have all of my staff MPHIA-trained and I never will.

He questioned Parks Canada's authority on these standards and questioned specifically the authority that Parks has for a company that does not meet the 60/30 ratio. He continued,

What happens if a Park Warden who decides he is going to be very enforcement-orientated comes across one of my guides and my guide doesn't have a business card that he is supposed to have and the guy tells the group to turn around? I don't know if they have the authority to do that... Within Park regulation and what not, it may be a policy, but it may be such an informal policy that Parks Canada hasn't gotten anything to stand on to challenge an operator that is illegal.

Calvin again noted his perception of Parks Canada and the enforcement of these regulations:

I think they are hemming and hawing and trying to figure out how to make it enforceable or whether they should make it enforceable. Maybe they might see the light and realize it just can't be achieved and they might have to rethink their goals and targets.

Nathan does understand the challenges that many business operators face in finding enough qualified staff and the importance of understanding the business communities concerns. He commented:

I have to say you have to be flexible to some extent. You can't just shut people down all the time. I think the trick is to build people slowly and hopefully the system will start kicking in and be able to supply the type of people that are needed to meet those requirements.

4.6.6. Concern with the Actual Number of Accredited Guides

One of the biggest issues in regards to enforcement of the certification standards for hiking guides from the business owners' and operation managers' perspectives is the belief that there are not enough accredited guides who are seeking work and available for these companies to hire. Bill commented,

Well, maybe it is not MPHIA, but it is Parks and MPHIA. Because they demand ... that a certain percentage of your staff have this course. But it is pretty much physically impossible because there are not enough people that have taken the course. Once you get to a company the size of ours, we need too many MPHIA accredited guides and there are not enough out there who are looking for work.

He continued,

Get enough people accredited so that you can actually enforce the rule. Stupid to say that 65 per cent of your staff has to be trained when there is physically not that amount of people out there.

Calvin explained his perspective:

What is frustrating for me is I am doing my absolute best to comply, I just physically can't find enough people... From the regulation side, it's on my mind all the time because I know I am operating what appears to be illegally and I don't want to be doing that but I have no way, other than shutting down the businesses, of getting around that... What am I supposed to do? I am supposed to shut down my business or a significant chunk of my business simply because your expectations can't be met and therefore you lose and I lose because I lose business and you, Parks Canada, lose people out there communicating what you want them to communicate.

Calvin felt that the future of MPHIA and the concept of accreditation should be closely examined:

Everyone is just avoiding the whole issue that there aren't enough certified guides... We just can't achieve it so how do we deal with it?

Bill noted his concerns with the knowledge standard goals of MPHIA and the issues regarding enforcement:

I think it is a good goal but I think the goal posts need to be wider. I think, maybe insist on the training but not on the accreditation. Sometimes, I mean, you physically can't get accredited because you have to have so many hours of experience. Yet in theory these people can't work because they are not accredited and we need them accredited. So make it mandatory for people to sit in the course. If the course is offered enough and cheap enough, then companies will say, "Okay, here is 200 bucks, go sit on the course, there is one running the first week of every month," and then they sit on the course and then they're done.

Bill and Calvin noted throughout their interviews the challenges of finding staff who are accredited and they both certainly saw this as one of the biggest concerns for MPHIA and the ability for Parks Canada

to regulate interpretation in the park. Bill simply stated, “They need to pump more and more people through.”

One of the concerns mentioned by multiple business owners was the impression that MPHIA’ courses were not being offered on a regular basis. They felt that this has impacted heavily on guides becoming accredited and the ability for MPHIA and Parks Canada’s standards to be met. MPHIA aims to have ten people in a course in order for it to be offered. However, as Nathan mentioned,

We need to look at the bigger picture than just the numbers. We have to say we have 20 people in that course so therefore we can suffer and have 6 in this... My focus is that we don’t run a course ever that loses a lot of money. If we lose \$50 bucks, it is not the end of the world. It is good for us to continue to offer those courses.

He sees this as important because,

We want to build... And what we have been doing is listening to what they [business owners] have to say and then slowly chipping away at their complaints and making it so they can’t make those complaints against us... We can say “We offered it, why didn’t you show up?” And the next complaint is, “Well, you didn’t offer it at the time that we wanted it. You told me the time, I asked you the time.” So that is what I mean by systematically breaking down their excuses for not showing up so we can get at the core reason for why they are not coming.

Encouraging more participation in the course beyond potential guides was one suggestion from Bill as way of having the courses offered on a more regular basis:

They should be trying to encourage more people to go in the course just to show an interest in the job. You could get people who are front-desk staff who are doing MPHIA. They don’t need it but get people going to it for their own general interest.

Bill may have a good point. Andy commented that he noticed general interest in the late 80’s when he taught a community course on the natural history of Banff. Many of those interviewed in the summer of 2006 indicated that they originally took the courses offered through MPHIA to learn more about the landscape in which they were living and not necessarily to work as a guide in the park. Nathan mentioned that some of the strongest supporters for MPHIA’s programs are not necessarily people involved with the guiding industry. He described nurses and hotel owners who have memberships in the Association. Similarly, Leslie said,

Hopefully, down the road people really understand what we are and without any resistance just come over and say, “Hey I want to learn this. Which kind of course do you have?” If that happens that would be great.

Building MPHIA’s perceived role within the community as a school of learning rather than a regulator of mandatory requirements for guides working in the park may help encourage more community involvement and interest in MPHIA’s programs and services. Offering additional courses that allow for transferability such as effective public speaking may also encourage a larger range of interest, enrolment, and awareness of the goals of the organisation. The resistance from the individual guides to become involved with MPHIA’s programs, as previously noted, has had the potential to effect enrolment in courses and the number of guides choosing to become accredited as Professional Interpreters. Part of that resistance to become certified by the individual guides may also be compounded by issues related to living in the Bow Valley. This topic and others will be further explored through the examination of the final theme: MPHIA’s relationships within the Banff guiding community.

4.7. MPHIA’s Relationships within the Banff Guiding Community

MPHIA has had a variety of partnerships within the Banff community. MPHIA was initiated by the goal of the Heritage Tourism Strategy to strengthen employee orientation, training and accreditation programming as it related to sharing heritage understanding with visitors (Heritage Tourism Strategy, 2007). MPHIA’s training has been aimed at helping deliver a quality interpretive guiding product for visitors to the Rocky Mountain National Parks. Both Parks Canada and the Banff Tourism industry are interlinked with MPHIA and the services it has provided.

4.7.1. MPHIA’s Relationship with Parks Canada

Parks Canada could be considered the strongest proponent of MPHIA. It is through MPHIA’s programs that guides working in the park are educated in the Park messages on commemorative and ecological integrity which are communicated to visitors to the park. As the Parks Canada Communication Officer noted:

With Parks Canada, visitor experience is part of our mandate. It's protection, it's education and it's visitor experience. MPHIA plays a pivotal role because our guides, our MPHIA guides, are out there making those connections. Creating that interpretive moment for somebody who goes from being a visitor to becoming an advocate.

The connection of MPHIA with Parks Canada can be seen through a variety of lenses. Parks Canada is not only responsible for the regulation of MPHIA's certification and knowledge standards, they also continue to support MPHIA by providing office space and instructors to teach components of the courses. Parks Canada has also been involved with the development of course content. It is understandable that, given this level of involvement, an operations manager would say, "I see MPHIA as being the mouth piece for Parks Canada." Whether MPHIA would agree, it is clear that Parks Canada and MPHIA do appear to have a symbiotic relationship, with both organizations gaining from each other.

Parks Canada's relationship with MPHIA also can be noted in its substantial financial contributions to the organisation. There was general agreement by participants that without Parks Canada's financial support, MPHIA's programs and services would not continue. Frasier noted the importance of Parks Canada's funding:

The bottom line is that they receive a lot of funding for MPHIA... If something happens to that funding the organisation is done, pretty sure about that. It would not operate just on user membership fees or exam fees.

Nathan noted that keeping a strong partnership with Parks Canada was an integral component in MPHIA's day to day operations:

A lot of time is spent trying to build stronger relationships with Parks Canada... There are certain benefits to being connected to Parks Canada and not being independent. Right now I think we still need their financial support for sure. If we did not have their financial support the costs of our courses would go up substantially.

In the initial years of the Association, Elaine explained that funding from Parks Canada came from a very general start of getting MPHIA off the ground by providing the finances to develop the

organisation and the day-to-day running of the business. The amount of monies given to MPHIA by Parks has decreased over the past 8 years. Nathan explained,

We were getting \$40,000 dollars a year... And then they [Parks Canada] decided to cut back... and before I came on they almost cut it 100 per cent. And they did say, "Okay, this is going to be it. MPHIA is going to be on its own." Until a Board Member, the Executive Director and the Parks Canada liaison walked into Parks and said, "If you want to kill this organisation, congratulations you have done it. We can operate with the current money that we have in our system probably for a year without funding from Parks Canada."

This action clearly assisted in maintaining Parks Canada's contribution of funds to MPHIA. However, as noted by Nathan, the funding received was less than that provided during the development of the Association and it is now meant to be directed towards very specific projects. For example, money from Parks was allocated to the creation of the on-line Basic course and the development of Basic MPHIA courses in Glacier and Waterton National Parks. Elaine explained,

Dedicated funds to specific projects...is really wonderful because then the Park can stand back and say this money did this.

There certainly are perceptions that breaking the ties from Parks Canada would be beneficial for the organisation and many who were interviewed see it as a future goal for MPHIA. Elaine stated,

Speaking as an MPHIA member, Parks is great to us. They give us the office space, they support us with our nominal administration fees and the costs, but I think we really need to stand apart... So my hope for MPHIA is that one day we will stand apart from Parks Canada. Being sustainable financially, having a membership that supports a community and the organization itself. To work as a partner with Parks Canada, not being as dependent as we are on (their) funds.

Andy expressed agreement with this idea:

It would be nice if it (MPHIA) could cut its strings to Parks Canada so that it is an independent organisation... I just would like it to stand on its own.

Nathan noted the challenges that Parks Canada would face from the guiding community if MPHIA was independent of Parks:

So we would have to see membership fees go up and we would have to see course fees go up. And where Parks Canada is going to run into serious issues if that was going to happen is that business would say, "That is not fair. You are forcing me to have these requirements. You need to have these courses available and at a price we can afford."

However, when looking towards the future of the Association Nathan stated:

I think within ten years it would probably be nice to be self-sufficient. There are certain limitations that come with being funded from Parks... especially now after the sponsorship scandal where they have to allocate things for specific projects. It would be nice to have a bigger chunk of money that we could have a little bit more flexibility with. To do better things, to offer maybe more programs, and, more ongoing learning opportunities. I would really like to see that improve in five years.

In looking at the relationship of MPHIA and Parks Canada, Nathan asserted that it "is a lot more than a funding source." Similarly, Ingrid, a Parks Canada Interpreter, believes the future of MPHIA is based on the support of Parks Canada and not just because of the monetary relationship. Ingrid explained that Parks Canada interpreters in 2006 were required to have the Standard Course through MPHIA, but she felt that the PI level should be a mandatory requirement. She further stated,

Parks is supposed to be setting the example. They are the ones who have been pushing on having a higher grade of education and compliance and such, so yeah, Park Interpreters should have [the Professional level of Accreditation].

It was noted by Bill that Parks Canada could and should further its relationship with MPHIA through promotion. He explained that he thought it was important for visitors to the park to be aware that knowledgeable, MPHIA-trained guides were available. He stated,

Well, Parks Canada is enforcing it right. They are setting the regulations so they should be advertising that they police the sector and that the guides should be MPHIA-trained.

Andy agreed,

I think Parks Canada is sinking lots of money into this. They could do a little bit more to raise the profile of these certified guides as something that is offered in this community at the trailhead or in the newspaper that they hand out in the park gate, and that sort of thing... I would like to see more evidence up front when people travel around this landscape that there are a group of people at your disposal willing to give you a good experience.

Bill also gave this example of how promotion of MPHIA by Parks Canada could be accomplished:

Why doesn't the Park, when the park interpreters do a presentation on bears or whatever, why not make it just MPHIA presentations? Then there is more acceptance. If Parks is doing free presentations under the umbrella of MPHIA, then it gets more awareness for the organization and then when someone is MPHIA-trained, then more people are like, oh yeah, we had a MPHIA guide.

Parks Canada's relationship with MPHIA has been noted as imperative in keeping the organisation operative. However, as noted, many of those interviewed did envision the future of MPHIA as a separate entity. Members of the guiding community spoke of limitations that may be caused by MPHIA's tight connection with the government body, including lack of support by private business. In 2006, the image of MPHIA is often as a regulation body rather than a school of learning, and perhaps this stems from the close relationship of the two organisations. Though Parks Canada has been supporting MPHIA through financial contributions, it has not been perceived by the guiding industry to have promoted MPHIA and the services of MPHIA-trained guides. Andy explained that in order for MPHIA to succeed in its mission of establishing and maintaining high standards in heritage interpretation it must become a desirable product for the tourism industry. He stated,

What I am not seeing is the tourism industry looking for those guides... I want someone to walk into this town and say, "Where is the certified guide?"... If someone is looking for or purchasing a guiding experience I want them to say, "I expect a certain standard" and here are the people that deliver it.

Perceptions from those interviewed indicated that promoting certified MPHIA trained guides may need to be encouraged not only by Parks Canada but throughout the Banff tourism industry.

4.7.2. MPHIA's Relationship with the Banff Tourism Industry

Defining who constitutes the Banff Tourism Industry certainly can be challenging and has the potential to be viewed from a variety of perspectives. The town of Banff, the Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau, Parks Canada, the Lake Louise Community Association, and the Banff Small Business Association are all concerned with creating and positioning Banff as a tourist destination. The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation (BHTC) is comprised of a volunteer board that has representation from each of the

organisations listed above, and is dedicated to implementing the Heritage Tourism Strategy in Banff National Park. With the Heritage Tourism Strategy having a direct relationship to the creation of MPHIA, it can be assumed that the tourism industry has been able to appreciate the potential benefit of having knowledgeable interpretive guides working in the Rocky Mountain landscape. As Nathan recalled,

What is important to note about the initial creation of MPHIA was that it was supported by and agreed upon by the tourism industry and by Parks Canada. It was not a "Parks Canada only" decision. MPHIA was viewed as an avenue for the tourism industry to have a formal voice in the creation of the standards that Parks Canada would require in its future licensing requirements.

The development of the Banff's Best course was an initiative of the BHTC and is funded by Parks Canada and the town of Banff. The course is administered by MPHIA and is taught by MPHIA instructors. It is evident through this relationship that the BHTC has respect for the MPHIA and believe that they are capable of delivering a high quality product. However, the overall perception that I noted by those interviewed was that the relationship between MPHIA and Banff's tourism industry was lacking.

As noted by Bill, there is little reason in 2006 to advertise his company as having MPHIA-trained guides. When he was asked, "Do you think people would sign up for your tours because they know that you have MPHIA trained guides?", he shook his head and indicated that he did not. He explained,

Because [tourists] don't know what it is, I would be surprised if it showed up as a blip on the radar. We don't advertise it, we say they are trained guides. If you pick up a brochure and you see MPHIA-accredited guides or you have got award-winning trained guides, same thing. You know, if you are from Baltimore and coming here, it means nothing.

Frasier agrees. He stated in regards to the guests that he has on his tours, "They couldn't give a dang whether I'm qualified by an association like MPHIA."

Statements from the guiding community help indicate to me that visitors who are coming to Banff and who are interested in purchasing an interpreted guided experience are unaware or are not

encouraged to seek out an MPHIA Professional Interpreter. It was perceived that the travel industry needs to become involved with the promotion of MPHIA. Ingrid stated,

In terms of the big picture, you got to get the tourism (Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau) office on board. You have to get Travel Alberta on board.

When discussing the future of MPHIA Andy explained,

I see two challenges [for MPHIA]: one is to gain that respect in the community that this is an important component of tourism and in fact this is what we do. MPHIA needs to establish that. But I would like to see Parks Canada and MPHIA and businesses also turning it around so it is what the tourism industry expects.

Many of those interviewed see MPHIA as benefiting the tourism industry by increasing the quality and the delivery of the interpretive programs being offered to visitors in park. However in 2006, it was not yet seen as advantageous for individual business or guides to promote having MPHIA accreditation. The lack of awareness of visitors that a better guiding experience is more likely through hiring a PI guide may have created a perceived lack of importance by businesses, and among individual guides to merit the effort in becoming accredited. Maintaining and creating stronger relationships with Parks Canada and the tourism industries of Banff has the potential to aid in the overall acceptance of MPHIA. Developing these relationships also has the potential to assist in defining the organisations image.

4.7.3. Breakdown of MPHIA's Membership

The direction of MPHIA in 2006 is determined by its own executive, board and members of the Banff guiding community. Challenges that the Association has faced in the past and continue to struggle with are related to the difficulties of bringing everyone together. Individuals and corporate businesses make up MPHIA's membership and an elected board helps to implement the goals and objectives that influence the future of the organisation.

4.7.4. Executive Director and the MPHIA Board

MPHIA's day-to-day operations in Banff are led by the Executive Director whose contract indicates that s/he works between 3 to 4 days a week. The decisions that are made on behalf of MPHIA are by board members and the Parks Canada liaison. As Nathan explained,

the Executive Director is a non-voting member, so technically s/he does not have a say in what happens. If the entire board disagreed with the Executive Director, the board could still push ahead with its agenda.

It was noted in the interviews in 2006 that the Executive Director was well respected in the Banff guiding community and though s/he does not vote, s/he is still very much in control of the day-to-day operations and helps lead the vision of the organisation. Elaine commented,

I think we are really lucky to have a spirited Executive Director right now. As a board, we are all volunteers (and) we all have day jobs. And sometimes when life gets really crazy, like in the early spring when everyone is hiring, everyone takes on as much as they can with these projects but the Executive Director is definitely the rudder. If something needs doing [s/he] will take action and take it to task and [s/he] is fantastic for that... [S/he] is very passionate on creating a community of educated professionals that represent their craft.

However as Nathan explained, the changes that have occurred with MPHIA's programs and services since 2003 should not be credited simply to a new Executive Director because the board structure and board members have also changed.

A past board member reflected,

I left the board... because MPHIA really is a Parks Canada, not even motivated but driven, organization. I was a little frustrated with the bureaucracy that was involved in it. There are many gaps. I don't think they are impossible but I got frustrated trying to provide MPHIA with some motivation in different directions or push certain issues and felt that I wasn't getting anywhere because it really is a Parks Canada organisation as opposed to a separate entity.

However he continued,

I think the board changes on a fairly regular basis, so you are getting a good mix of people and what I am hoping is that when there is a voice that comes out in the crowd, whether it is mine or somebody else's,... at some point you will get the right person to respond to any one of those given ideas and to start pushing them further.

The board members of MPHIA consist of seven elected members of the Banff guiding community as well as a Parks Canada liaison. As explained by Nathan,

The only one who has been on (the board) from the very beginning is the Parks Canada liaison... Because someone has to be on from Parks all the time and because the way Parks is structured if you have to shift that every few years it just turns into a kybosh because then no one individual is responsible for that portfolio.

One of the challenges with the MPHIA board is finding volunteers who are interested in running for one of the seven elected positions. Though the system is in place for the membership to vote for board members, this has not taken place in the entire history of the organisation. So, as explained by Nathan, many members on the board are elected through acclamation.

It has been noted by members of the board that one of the issues in 2006 is bringing the membership of MPHIA closer together and creating a stronger learning community. When a board member was asked, "What is MPHIA trying to achieve in the park?", she stated,

So I see MPHIA as an educational opportunity and a place to build a community based around interpretation and people with like values.

According to MPHIA's website, it is an organisation dedicated to fostering a healthy learning community amongst guides, researchers, Parks Canada and other organisations and individuals committed to creating memorable and meaningful experiences in the Mountain National Parks(MPHIA, 2007: 1). Nathan's vision of MPHIA and its role in developing a community of learning was expressed as:

I envision MPHIA more as a hub a way of connecting a bunch of different things. Interpretation Canada has some neat things that are happening. We have the Bow Valley Naturalists locally that are offering really neat programs and walks. There is no need for MPHIA to have to re-create things that are already being done all I see us doing is connecting it. So if we are the center of the hub and there are all these spokes that are reaching out to these different places nationally and regionally we want to connect people to them. So we make it easier for people to learn.

4.7.5. Connecting the Membership

MPHIA has attempted to provide ongoing learning opportunities though offering specific programs such as field trips and guest speakers, to bring the guiding community and the membership of MPHIA together. Elaine gave an example of the “Waffle Master Night” which was a take on “Toastmasters,” where the membership was invited to come together to practice and learn more about public speaking and to test their skills. She also recalled one particular field trip that took members of MPHIA out to Kootenay National Park to learn about fires. She believed it to be a very successful event and she explained why:

“The fires of 2003,” it was a big topic, a very tangible topic after the summer we went through. We had a Parks Canada warden who took a group out on a Discover Banff bus and it was fabulous to see three groups coming together to support the opportunity... I am pretty sure it was the topic or maybe it was the timing but we got a really good response to that... We had many curious individuals and I think everyone was an MPHIA member.

Though it has been noted that MPHIA has had some success with bringing the membership together to learn from one another, it was also a focus of concern for some. Nathan explained that MPHIA has attempted to contact the membership at the annual general meeting, through emails and through personal phone calls to see what type of programs the members would be interested in attending however he explained that he rarely received any feedback. His frustration was evident:

Is it apathy in the membership? People don't get involved, people don't come to research updates. We create field trips and people don't show up... We ask for feedback, we just don't get it... [The challenge is] finding the programs to keep your membership happy but also having people go to the events that you try to supply.

When Gary was asked what he saw as the future of MPHIA he responded by explaining that he thought the Association needed to have the members more involved. He explained,

There should be more activity. When you look at the Alpine Club of Canada, they have so many things going on, [MPHIA] should keep us all together and interested in doing things with them... You know, have fun as a bunch of member guides... We should feel that we are members of a club, make it prestigious. You should feel proud of being a part of MPHIA and being a member of that club.

Andy agreed,

It gives people a sense of self worth to belong to something. Something people want to be a member of and take pride in being a member of and take pride into the extent that they interact with their colleagues. We need to build a certain social infrastructure into this interpretive guiding community. We should have a big barbeque out at the pits or something like that and recognize that we are the people that deliver this product. Recognize that we are the ones that do that and we are trained to do it and we do it well.

Bringing the membership together and finding the right way to do this is certainly something that the board has recognized as a goal for MPHIA. Elaine made this comment:

We have to find a way to get the community together and maybe it means going on-line or finding innovative ways to connect people. Maybe, it is something as simple as a newsletter or Interpretation Canada does great workshops that people do attend. Maybe that is our next step.

Denise gave her perception of the reason why there was a lack of participation for the professional development programs offered by MPHIA:

They offer a lot of local courses on new topics but every time we have to pay money... If they say the organization is non-profit company, they should offer more free programs and they will have more follow up.

However, the struggle of bringing the membership together was interpreted as more than the cost of additional field trips and guest speakers. Many of the guides interviewed indicated that they would be willing to pay minimal fees for outings and programs of interest. It became evident that part of the difficulty of bringing the membership together to create a learning community was the result of the seasonality of guiding employment. Elaine gave her impression of this:

We have tried [bringing the members together to learn from one another] and we are not going to stop trying, but you find that guides because of the seasonal lifestyle we lose. They are here and they are busy. And then when these professional development courses are offered, the guides are either really tired because it has been a really big season and the last thing they want to do is hang out with other guides or they are gone. They are off to their winter job or they are taking a break and back with their family. It is tough to get that community together because it so not nine to five.

Developing a tighter bond of interpreters and a community of guides is challenging due to the transient nature of guides working in the Bow Valley. The transient population is also perceived to impact the number of people taking MPHIA courses and the number of guides who are becoming accredited at the Professional level. The operation managers who were interviewed detailed the challenges of finding competent, friendly and knowledgeable staff and then retaining them. When Calvin was asked, “Do you think there is a high turn over in the guiding industry?”, he responded,

Yes, because there are so many different jobs that you can do. You could go bike touring, you could go day hiking, you could go interpretive hiking, you could go overnight hiking - there is just all sorts of things. I look at my staff and some of the best staff that I've got, I know I am not going to keep them because there are all these other jobs that they would be selected for right away and in fact they have. They have been selected by some of the best companies in the world and that is a pat on the back to us because we were able to capture them. But there is no question that they are going to move on to other things and travel all over the world. This is not just a Banff issue... Guiding is often a lifestyle career decision and that lifestyle usually includes world travel.

The transient nature of guides working in the Banff community may not always be related to lifestyle choice, however. Kevin detailed the changes that he has noticed in regards to staffing the guiding industry during the ten years he has been working in Banff:

When I first hired on to the company, there was a lot more career guys, guys that would spend ten to twenty years working with the company. Nowadays, with the big money to be made in the Oil Patch, we don't see that as commonly anymore. We get people who work two or three years during their summer break while they are away from university and then, they go and get a real job or, quote, “a real job” and they go on from there... So that has dropped our average age down to about twenty years of age. I am 33. Out of seventy people through the summer time, I am probably the sixth oldest in the company.

Mike believes the situation is compounded further by the cost of living in the Bow Valley:

Our biggest challenge to keep people here really is the challenge of Banff when it comes to staff accommodation. If someone is around for a few years and they want to rent a nice little apartment on their own. It is tough here. If they want to buy one it is almost impossible. That is how we lose all our staff you know. Like if people want to get married or they want to start nesting with somebody, it costs too much to find a decent little place... So the challenge is not that people lose interest in guiding, I think, as much as it is hard to be 40 years old in Banff and seeing a future for yourself.

Nathan had a similar perception which he stated when discussing the issues that MPHIA has faced in regards to the number of accredited guides:

You know there are a lot of other issues that are not just interpretation related... And part of it is the expense of living in the Valley... I would like to see the wages increase substantially. I find the wages for some private guides pitiful... The challenge with the profession is not enough people stay long enough to get good or when they get good they leave.

Ingrid noted that she also felt there was a burn-out rate for guides and part of that was contributed to the non-compliance of visitors to the park. She commented:

The non-compliance is a really irritating factor [of being an interpreter in the park]. Here you are putting your heart into this and telling people about the bears and that we want to have bears for the next time they come around what do they want to do they want to get out of their vehicles and take a picture.

Gary noted that the enthusiasm and energy that is needed to be a guide is challenging and that the repetition of tours contributes to guides leaving the industry. Though there were varying views on why the retention of interpreters in the Bow Valley was difficult, many commented and agreed that what makes a strong guide was the amount of time he or she spent in the landscape. Andy maintains that one of the reasons he is seen as a Master Interpreter in Banff is related to the fact that he has spent 25 years in the Rocky Mountain Parks. As Nathan stated,

Let's make it a profession, lets make it so people can stay because you can't get good in a short amount of time. Interpreters, it's just like any other profession, they have to go on their own learning journey... until they get to the point where they are really good at what they do but it takes years and years and years.

The challenges of creating a community of learning through MPHIA's membership as well as the concerns that are faced by individual businesses trying to find and retain a certain quota of PI's are interwoven with the issues related to working with a transient guide population. In order for Parks Canada to be able to fully commit to the licensing requirements for interpretation as well as for the National Park and tourism agencies to guarantee a high quality of interpretation services to visitors, guiding companies need to be able to retain qualified guides.

In order for the goals of the Heritage Tourism Strategy to be reached, guides must be committed to becoming a PI. Individual guides must be encouraged to choose a career in interpretation and be able to see a future for them self living in the Bow Valley. Without proper incentives for interpreters to envision a career in guiding, MPHIA's courses which are focused primarily on gaining knowledge of the Rocky Mountain landscape, will continue to lack appeal for a large audience of participants. Though the structure of MPHIA appears to be successful, the overall lack of commitment by individual guides to the Banff community may in itself be the biggest challenge that MPHIA must face in order to be a "professional association dedicated to improving the quality of information delivery to visitors of Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks"(MPHIA, 2006).

CHAPTER FIVE: TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING A PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

5.1. Introduction

Past research has indicated that interpretation has been utilized by management of Parks and Protected Areas (PPAs) to engage, educate and satisfy visitors while simultaneously encouraging appropriate behaviors that aim to protect and sustain the resource (Madin & Fenton, 2004; Tubb, 2003; Stewart, Hayward, Devlin & Kirby, 1998; Moscardo, 1996). With interpretation and communication skills being a strong component of the duties and responsibilities of a tour guide (Black & Weiler, 2005), the effectiveness of interpretation training has become a relevant area of inquiry.

The use of interpretation as a management technique in nature-based settings is seen as a useful approach for Banff National Park to achieve Parks Canada's mandate which states:

On behalf of the people of Canada, we protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada's natural and cultural heritage and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure their ecological and commemorative integrity for present and future generations. (Parks Canada, 2007)

Guide interpretation of Banff's natural and cultural heritage, as indicated by a number of studies (Madin & Fenton, 2004, Tubb 2003, Gramman 2000), may help develop a connection between the visitor and the landscape, which may act to reduce depreciative behaviours in the park. Thus, guides who are delivering effective interpretation in Banff have the potential to assist the National Park in achieving its three part mandate of public education, visitor satisfaction and ecological and commemorative integrity.

The need to create a system to assure quality in interpretive guiding in Banff National Park was highlighted by the Banff Bow Valley Study undertaken in the mid 1990's. This was further supported by the local guiding community including members from Parks Canada and private tourism businesses. The creation of an association that would assure quality in interpretive guiding was agreed upon by the Banff community. However, the actual structure, including the role and function of that association (MPHIA),

was less clearly articulated. This latter issue has created challenges for Parks Canada's licensing requirements and the relationship between MPHIA and private guiding businesses in the park to this day.

Over the past ten years the development of professional associations as a means to administer individual guide training and certification programs has gained credibility in the tour guiding industry (Black & Ham, 2005). Both developed and developing countries have implemented such systems to help create professionally trained guides who may positively impact the quality of the visitor experience (Weiler & Black, 2005). And although benefits have been noted in academic literature on the development of guide certification, such as assisting operation owners select employees and giving guides noted recognition in the industry, so too have the challenges of implementing such a system (Weiler & Black, 2005).

In particular it has been noted that guide certification may exclude people from entering the

...certification process because they do not meet the eligibility criteria or cannot for logistical or financial reasons enter the program. (Weiler & Black, 2005, p. 31)

These challenges have been noted in Australia: "where guides are poorly paid, lack permanent employment and are often located in remote areas" (Weiler & Black, 2005, p.31). These concerns centre on issues facing the tourism industry in resort communities in general such as tourism seasonality (Baum & Lundtorp, 1999), cost-of-living concerns (Hettinger, 2005) and the personal characteristics of resort workers (Adler & Adler, 1999b). Throughout the conduct of the interviews it became evident that the difficulties experienced by MPHIA in developing an active membership were not confined to the day-to-day running of the association but extended to the larger issues affecting the tourism industry in resort communities.

5.2. MPHIA's Relationships within the Banff Guiding Community

Exploring the stakeholders of the Banff guiding community's interconnected relationships, provides a useful starting point in expanding the understanding of how the perceptions within a nature-based

guiding community may impact a professional guiding association and its role within that community. Prior to discussing MPHIA within the broader frame of literature written on the subjects of certification and guiding in nature-based communities, it is useful to reflect back on Figure 3.2, which initially helped illustrate the membership of the Banff guiding community. Figure 5.1 expands on the original illustration to highlight connections between the stakeholders that became evident through the interviews.

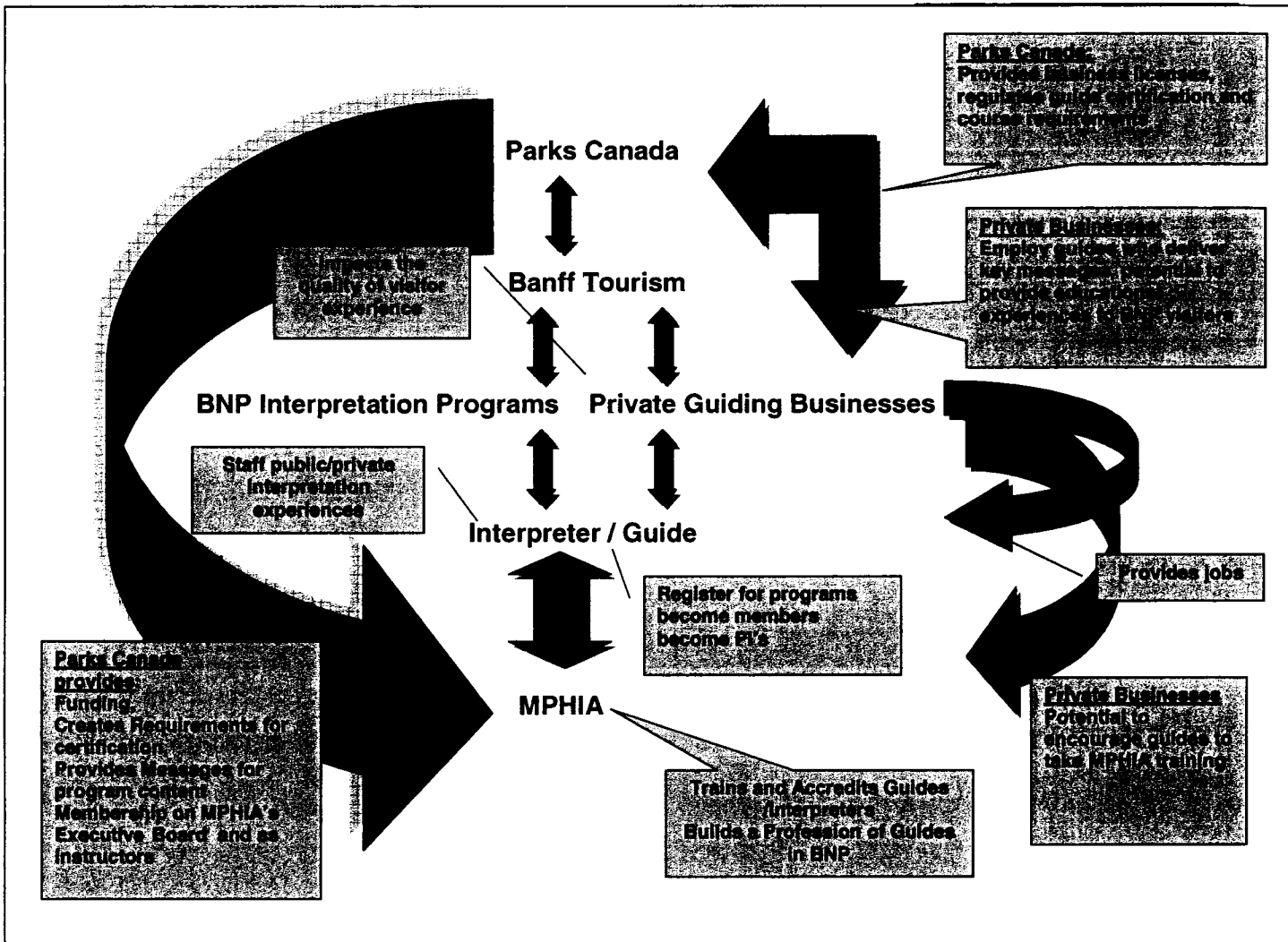


Figure 5.1. Relationships within Banff Guiding Community with highlighted Connections

As can be seen in Figure 5.1, MPHIA provides training for the individual guides and interpreters who work for both the public and private sectors in Banff National Park (BNP). The individual guides ultimately impact the success of MPHIA's programs and the strength of its membership, as they choose to register or not to register for MPHIA's classes, decide if they want to become accredited and make the choice to maintain an active membership with the Association. MPHIA's training programs may be considered useful for both private businesses and BNP interpretation programs in preparing their staff

for guiding and interpretation roles. The perception a business owner may have towards the overall usefulness of MPHIA's programs to train his/her staff will impact the level of encouragement and considered necessity for the individual guides to become involved with the Association's services. Both private businesses and Banff National Park, hire guides and interpreters to work for them and they determine the requirements and or qualifications that are needed to be employed by their organisations. For example, Parks Canada determines if it is necessary for the Interpreters who they hire for BNP to have the PI level of Accreditation. Private Businesses and Parks Canada also determine how they will compensate their staff based on MPHIA's certifications. If a guide is aware that they will be paid a higher hourly wage, or that they will be given priority for the work that is available, there might be a larger incentive for a guide to challenge for MPHIA certification levels.

Beyond the individual guiding businesses and BNP public programs, Banff Tourism has a continuing interest in the quality of products and services that are provided to visitors to the park because a poor visitor experience has the potential to impact the overall Banff tourism industry. Banff Tourism has a direct relationship with private businesses and Parks Canada. However, this cannot be said of Banff Tourism's relationship with MPHIA, as the "Banff's Best" course, which was delivered by MPHIA on behalf of Banff Tourism, appears to be the only area of cooperation.

Parks Canada managers have a strong and direct impact on the day to day running of MPHIA and perhaps rightly so, because the delivery of quality interpretation is integral to Parks Canada's mandate. The provision of funds, logistical support, educational material, and instructors, as well as the enforcement of MPHIA's training requirements and maintaining a presence on the MPHIA board are all ways in which Parks Canada interacts with the Association. Over the past ten years, Parks Canada's has developed a relationship with MPHIA that provides many benefits to the Association but the many ties between the two imply for some members of the guiding community that MPHIA is not an entirely

independent entity. One outcome of this perception is that MPHIA is perceived as being more of a regulatory agency rather than a not-for-profit school of learning.

The intricate relationships among the stakeholders of the Banff guiding community have a continuing influence on MPHIA's operations and success as an organisation. Modifications to any of these existing relationships has the potential to affect the success of the Association. However, the quality of a professional guiding association is influenced by other factors beyond these relationships. Externalities, characteristic of a mature nature-based tourism community, such as the seasonality of tourism demand and the availability of appropriate hires impact the community as a whole and also the continuing viability of MPHIA.

These broader challenges, which impact nature-based tourism communities and influence quality in the tour guiding industry, have been examined in other contexts. The combination of this experience combined with the perceptions of those interviewed provides insights into how a professional guiding association may strengthen its existing relationships and the quality of guiding within its own community.

This chapter continues by focusing first on the more specific aspects of MPHIA's education programs. This is followed by a discussion of the interplay between MPHIA's curriculum and Parks Canada's licensing requirements and the potential benefits of promoting increased awareness of MPHIA's certified guides more broadly through the combined efforts of the Association, Banff Tourism and Parks Canada. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Banff as a resort town and the implications this has for the successful implementation of guiding certification programs.

5.3. MPHIA's Educational Programs

The majority of MPHIA's courses and certification programs have been designed for guides working in Banff National Park. One of the larger challenges for MPHIA, is motivating individual guides to register for training programs, pursue professional certification and to become active members of the

organisation. To be more successful, MPHIA must first ensure that the programs and certification procedures that have been implemented meet the needs of the individual guides working in the industry in terms of: content of training, transferability and inclusivity of its program offerings, and the mechanics of evaluation. This will help increase guides' interest in MPHIA's services as they will be able to envision a relationship with MPHIA as mutually beneficial. This will help MPHIA's role within Banff be perceived as a school offering skill development programs to citizens of the nature-based tourism community.

5.3.1. Content of Training

MPHIA's present structure for both its Standard and Professional Level courses provide information about the ecology, geology, park management, and heritage of the Rocky Mountain Parks. The information may be considered very relevant and useful for guides choosing to work in the local region. MPHIA's present structure also enables new members of the community to learn the knowledge that is needed to take up employment as a guide in the park. Similar to guide certification programs in other countries, MPHIA's training may also help individual guides find employment, as the training programs provide a minimum standard to assist business owners in hiring staff (Crabtree & Black, 2000). However, MPHIA's Rocky Mountain knowledge-based programs may limit participation by guides who are interested in building general core competencies that will assist them throughout their career, a career in guiding that may or may not include permanent employment in BNP.

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is an example of an organisation that attracts members by providing training and certification in skills that can be applied in multiple contexts. The four day workshop which prepares students to become NAI Certified Interpreter Guides, covers basic understandings and skills in interpretation including: definitions and principles, knowing your audience, knowing your resource, the importance of developing a theme, the writing of measurable performance objectives; and program delivery techniques (NAI, 2007). These skills are valuable to all interpreters

and can be applied generally in any region. Similarly, Interpretation Canada also provides training programs to develop ones communication and interpretation skills to be applied in multiple contexts(Interpretation Canada, 2007). Though MPHIA provides a day of training on interpretation techniques with the PI course, the Association may benefit from implementing further programs that are less ‘place’ specific and more focused on developing what would be perceived by guides as transferable skills. Developing such programs may also attract a larger audience base of participants (perhaps even beyond the Banff community). Furthermore, MPHIA, which states its mission as “a professional association dedicated to improving the quality of *information delivery* to visitors of Canada’s Rocky Mountain Parks” (MPHIA, 2007:1) may want to evaluate the importance the association is placing on the development of communication skills and how a guide may become an effective interpreter.

MPHIA may also want to consider developing additional programs on outdoor recreation, tourism and business related themes to attract more local residents. For example, risk management, public speaking, the writing of press releases, interpretive writing, special event planning, and the debriefing of outdoor adventure activities could attract not only guides working in the Bow Valley but also other tourism industry workers. This may help to develop a stronger relationship between tourism operators, Banff tourism and MPHIA. Attracting a broader audience may be a starting point in altering the image of the role of MPHIA within the community and increasing the level of respect and appreciation of the breadth of the Association’s services.

5.3.2. Transferability and Recognition of Qualifications

The lack of transferability of MPHIA certification was expressed by the guides who were interviewed as a deterrent in becoming further accredited by the organisation. The hiking guides in particular commented that if they were to expand or increase their level of qualifications their preference would be through the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG). Becoming certified by the

ACMG was seen as a much more transferable qualification that would assist them in gaining employment more readily elsewhere.

For an individual guide, one of the perceived benefits of gaining professional certification is obtaining a recognized industry qualification (Crabtree & Black, 2000). The EcoGuide Program of Australia offers a “pathway to nationally recognized and portable formal qualifications within the Australian Qualification Framework” (Crabtree & Black, 2000, p. 7). MPHIA, in contrast, offers no such linkages to any nationally recognized system of qualifications. National or even international recognition of formal qualifications is seen to give certified guides a competitive edge and the skills needed to carry on in a career in interpretation beyond a specific location (EcoGuide, 2007).

The Australian EcoGuide certification is directly linked to Ecotourism Australia which is an organisation that administers both nature tourism and ecotourism certification for private businesses across the country (EcoTourism Australia, 2007). Ecoguide Certification is considered to benefit both the individual guides and also tourism operators, as it provides the latter with the ability to promote a “genuine nature tourism or ecotourism product, providing a competitive edge for these niche markets” (EcoGuide, 2007). These perceived benefits for EcoTourism Australia’s stakeholders help the Association to attract guides to become certified through that organisation. To provide even more national recognition for the individual guides, Ecotourism Australia has provided joint training programs with Interpretation Australia (Crabtree & Black, 2000). MPHIA may want to consider collaborating with existing guiding certifications such as the NAI or Interpretation Canada to help provide guides with a qualification that is more transferable and thus create a stronger incentive for them to obtain MPHIA qualifications.

The need for MPHIA to offer programs that develop skills that are perceived to be more transferable in scope may be related to the personal characteristics of those who choose to work in the guiding industry. Adler and Adler’s (1999a) research explored workers at a resort community in Hawaii

and classified individuals into four specific groups: new immigrants, locals, seekers and managers. The seekers were noted as often holding positions very similar to that of guiding (i.e., sport instruction in scuba diving or skiing). Originating predominantly from developed nations or from non-tourism areas of the country, seekers were considered generally to hold higher levels of education and skills than locals and new immigrants. Both the seekers and the managers were noted specifically as having the potential to relocate and move positions frequently. While managers were noted as moving to new locations to advance their careers in the hospitality industry, the seekers were seen as individuals who specifically sought out destinations to live and work that provided them with recreation and leisure opportunities. Essentially, leisure was considered the motivating factor that created the seekers peripatetic lifestyle.

As explained by Adler and Adler (1999a), the individuals classified as seekers would purposefully

... acquire a range of occupational skills that would enable them to find a job anywhere they moved. Before they embarked on their travels, many picked up readily mobile credentials. To these repertoires, they added new skills along their journeys. (p. 42)

These findings are relevant to MPHIA's situation and reinforce the importance of offering training programs that are perceived by their potential customers as recognizable qualifications throughout the guiding industry. As a first step, efforts to facilitate more widespread recognition of MPHIA certification within the National Park System or throughout Canada is likely to encourage more participation and interest in MPHIA's credentials. Developing the best approach for MPHIA's qualifications to be more recognizable would be a useful discussion for the board members of MPHIA.

5.3.3. The Evaluation Format for Professional Interpreter Certification

MPHIA's present structure, for a guide to become accredited as a PI is based on: experience, education, and performance the oral and written exam. To review MPHIA's point system to gain PI accreditation, please refer to Appendix F. Equal emphasis is placed on the written and oral exam. Each exam is worth a hundred points towards the needed three hundred, and as explained by Nathan, an executive member for MPHIA, one must achieve a score of seventy per cent on both of these exams in order to become

accredited. Placing such emphasis on the written and oral exam, rather than previous training through university or college programs, has created a system that is equally accessible to guides with and without formal education. By providing this form of inclusivity for members of the guiding community to become certified could be considered a benefit to the present structure and, in this way, is similar to what has been put in place in Australia for EcoGuide certification.

Multi-lingual Versions of PI Exam

A drawback to using a written exam as an evaluation format is that it creates a high level of pressure for individuals to demonstrate and articulate their level of knowledge of the Rockies in writing. This might be a significant challenge, if English is not an individual's first language. In Banff, Japanese guides may take MPHIA's written and oral exams in Japanese. Both Denise, a Japanese tour manager, and Leslie, an instructor for MPHIA's Japanese courses, expressed the opinion that the development of this option has been a sound decision to motivate members of the Japanese guiding community to undertake MPHIA's programs.

The importance of developing multi-lingual exams was also referred to by interviewees with respect to providing the written exam for the PI level in both of Canada's official languages, French and English. The implementation of Section 41, of the Official Languages Act of the Canadian Federal Government, was incorporated into the Parks Canada's Action Plan, of 2003-2006. Essentially, this action plan aimed at increasing the representation of both official languages within program offerings at National Parks across Canada. As MPHIA administers the certification requirements for interpreters to work in the Rocky Mountain National Parks, providing the exams in French should be a priority for the Association. As expressed by Elaine, a Communications Officer for Parks Canada, "It is our dedication to Canadians to have programs in French and English." Therefore, it seems very justifiable that guides and interpreters should have the option to take both the written and oral exam in French.

Structure of PI Oral Exam

The oral exam tests an individual's ability to prepare and implement a five-minute interpretive presentation. This allows an individual to be evaluated on both communication and interpretive skills. The ability to develop and maintain a theme throughout a presentation is just one example of interpretation that can be tested through this evaluation format. Another benefit to MPHIA's oral examination is that it allows for multiple evaluators to view and assess the quality of the interpretation. This provides a level of reliability in MPHIA's ability to certify an individual's skill in interpretation.

A possible weakness of the structure of the oral exam, highlighted by both Calvin an operations manger and Frasier a hiking guide, is that most of the delivery of interpretation in the park is not provided in a planned five-minute presentation in a specific location. Often guided tours in the park are half or full day excursions throughout which guides are expected to deliver 'Off the Cuff' interpretation. 'Off the cuff' interpretation in the guiding industry refers to an impromptu interpretive moment, and may arise due to noticing a transient feature in the landscape, coming across wildlife, responding to a visitor's question, or for a variety of other serendipitous situations. MPHIA's oral examination format does not assess this ability, which in the Banff context may determine the difference between an adequate and excellent interpreter.

Both the EcoGuide Certification of Australia and the Field Guides Association of Southern Africa conduct their practical or oral assessments in the actual context where the guide operates. This method of evaluation was suggested by some in the Banff interviews (i.e., Andy, Ingrid, and Gary) as an ideal approach to evaluation but was believed to be impractical due to the cost of hiring evaluators and the amount of time that would be needed to appropriately assess individual guides in their place of work.

For individual guides, there are many benefits to workplace assessments including: evaluation takes place as part of their normal work day, less preparation is required, and the guide is assessed in a familiar environment (EcoGuide, 2003). Developing in-the-field assessments also provides the

opportunity for the professional association to evaluate other guide competencies such as group management skills. Though developing such a system is costly (Black & Ham 2005), MPHIA might want to consider in-the-field assessments for guides who are employed in Banff as they have been considered the most effective and valid means of assessing how a guide will perform in their actual work place (EcoTourism, Australia, 2003).

The Australian EcoGuide Program provides three options for candidates to be assessed in a work place environment. The first choice is an actual on-the-job assessment. The second is a simulated work place assessment, for example, a role play at a mock location, and the third option is a video assessment for candidates who are living or working in remote locations. MPHIA may want to further explore some of these options as a way to enhance the evaluation procedures for certifying PI's.

5.3.4. PI's Maintaining Active Membership with MPHIA

Gaining the support of individual guides is essential for MPHIA's overall success. A major concern for MPHIA has been the small number of individuals choosing to become PI certified, and of those, the equally small number who are maintaining an active membership with the Association. The number of guides who have obtained the PI level of certification as of Jan 31, 2007 was 279. However, only 169 of these PI certified guides were still active members (MPHIA Management, personal communication, February 1, 2007). These statistics help portray the reality that 50 per cent of the guides who have gone through the process of PI certification are not continuing as professional guides in Banff National Park. Either they are continuing to work in Banff in a guiding capacity without maintaining their status as PIs or, what might be considered more likely is that they are no longer working as an interpreter or guide in Banff National Park. With a loss of MPHIA's membership base it is important for the Association to capture the interest of new guides who have entered the community while maintaining the interest of those guides who are continuing to live and work in the Banff community. Therefore, ensuring that both evaluation procedures for guide certification and course content meet the needs of the intended clientele

is important, as the success of a professional association, "...often depends on the enthusiasm and interest of its members" (Black & Weiler, 2005, p.29).

5.4. The Regulation of MPHIA's Knowledge Standards by Parks Canada Licensing Requirements

The use of professional training and certification requirements for individual guides is often linked with that of licensing requirements, as an extended method to ensure quality in the tour guiding industry. Black and Weiler's (2005) review indicated the use of tour guide licensing as an approach to protect consumers by creating a mandatory level of quality. A recognized advantage was that licensing creates a minimal standard that must be met by all practitioners. To help ensure that essential messages are being relayed to visitors of BNP, Parks Canada has begun to administer business licenses based on MPHIA's training and certification requirements. Licensing in this case not only is aimed at protecting consumers but also to protect the natural resource.

In 2006, the regulation of MPHIA's knowledge standards by Parks Canada may have been the strongest motivator for individual guides to register for MPHIA's courses and to become certified by the organisation. This may be considered a benefit in attracting participants for MPHIA's programs, and as explained by Black and Ham (2005):

The long-viability of the (accreditation) programme is more likely to be assured if certification can become embedded in the legislative framework through licensing. (P. 191-192)

However, Parks Canada's use of mandatory MPHIA training and guide certification as part of the requirements for private operators to obtain a park business license has not helped MPHIA's image within the Banff community. Parks Canada's licensing requirements has created a perception that MPHIA's role within Banff is that of regulator. This image has, in the opinion of some, weakened the relationship between the Association and private businesses.

Andy, who has been a member of the Banff community for the past twenty-five years, expressed the sentiment that in Banff, sometimes people just do not like to be told what to do. The reluctance of certain private businesses to become involved with MPHIA through encouraging their staff to take the

available training may stem from a disinterest in government control rather than a dislike of MPHIA's services. Banff tourism operators' past experiences with BNP management may have created hesitancy to be too involved with MPHIA due to the latter's apparent strong connections to Parks Canada.

The lack of accredited guides maintaining their affiliation with MPHIA has also directly impacted the number of PI guides available to hiking companies. As expressed by Calvin, an operations manager, companies that would like to meet Parks Canada's licensing requirements are finding it extremely difficult to do so. Given the current state of guide certification, it would seem premature for Parks Canada to increase the pressure on private business owners to have two-thirds of their hiking guides with the PI level of certification.

Parks Canada's reluctance to be heavy-handed with enforcing the licensing requirements is also very understandable. Shutting down a guiding business based on a lack of certified guides, would impact visitor experiences in the park, and would reduce opportunities for park management messages to be delivered to the public. As explained by Black and Weiler (2005) and what has been clearly seen in Banff, is that licensing often proves difficult to enforce. The lack of strict enforcement by Parks Canada has sent a message to the Banff community of uncertainty on the use of licensing as the method to ensure quality of interpretation in the park.

From those interviewed, I did gain the sense that the introduction of MPHIA's Standard qualification was appreciated generally by the Banff guiding community. Also, it appeared that at least with the hiking guide operators, the Standard Level as a minimum requirement was considered both a reasonable and achievable expectation for companies. Encouraging the Standard Level requirement beyond hiking operators and towards tour bus (step-on) guides was also considered, by many, an appropriate step forward for the management of the park. Given this situation, Parks Canada might want to consider adjusting the licensing requirements for hiking companies in the park by replacing the current PI requirement with the lower Standard Level of interpretation. Such a decision would go some way

towards ensuring that the most essential messages are being communicated to visitors and may also make Parks Canada's licensing requirements more palatable to the operators and hence, more easily enforceable.

Although ensuring that guides operating in BNP are appropriately trained is a prime mandate of the Association, this clientele itself is unlikely to be sufficient to ensure MPHIA's continuing viability. The long-term future of the Association will probably depend as much on its ability to reach a wider audience with its programs and certification systems as on continuing and improving its current relationship with BNP.

5.5. Beyond Parks Canada: Reaching Out to the Banff Guiding Community

While it is one thing to develop certification programs and suit them to the needs of the clientele, this in itself does not ensure quality guiding. A necessary adjunct is the development of a system to ensure that individuals and businesses working within a tourist destination do in fact seek out and employ appropriately qualified guides. Beyond licensing, systems such as codes of conduct and awards of excellence have been introduced in guiding communities to assure that quality is being achieved. These methods of quality assurance are not based on compulsory requirements. Awards of excellence, in particular, are seen as creating a desire for individual guides or a private business to be recognized as providing quality in the industry in the tours or services that they provide (Black & Weiler, 2005).

The Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation (BHTC), which helped establish the Heritage Tourism Strategy and the implementation of MPHIA in the late 1990's, has encouraged awards of excellence through the development of their annual Heritage Tourism Awards Night. At this event 'Outstanding Heritage Interpreter' is awarded by MPHIA, and as explained on the BHTC website:

recognizes an individual who has demonstrated excellence in interpreting the natural and cultural heritage of the Rocky Mountains in Banff National Park. The outstanding heritage interpreter is an individual whose dedication and belief in the goals of heritage interpretation is demonstrated through their passion and actions in the field. (BHTC, 2006)

Other awards that are available annually are focused towards private and public operators in the park. ‘Strongest Commitment to Staff Heritage Orientation’ and ‘Best Heritage Related Experience’ are just two examples. Providing these incentives for individual guides and operators may enhance the desire to excel in guiding performance and provide quality interpretation experiences. The awards of excellence may also have the potential of furthering the reputation of a professional guiding association and licensing and certification schemes by awarding companies and individuals based on the requirements of these assurance schemes.

As Black and Weiler’s (2005) review of quality assurance schemes indicated:

to raise awareness and enhancement of individual guide performance as well as guiding across an industry, a combination of mechanisms would be the most appropriate and beneficial to all stakeholders. (p. 34)

What can be problematic with multiple quality assurance schemes is that they may not necessarily be consistent in their standards nor complement one another. For example, if a quality heritage tourism award was made to a business that had not met the park management business licensing requirements, it would potentially undermine the benefit of having multiple forms of quality assurance, as standards for assuring quality would be contradictory. To eliminate the potential for this type of outcome, providers of quality assurance schemes must develop relationships, share information and work together to achieve consistency in the criteria they use to evaluate excellence.

In Banff, multiple forms of quality assurance have been implemented and MPHIA, Banff Tourism and Parks Canada cooperate in many areas of their operations. However, enhancing the existing relationships may further the quality of guiding and interpretation in BNP.

5.6. Working Together to Create Visitor Demand

One deficiency noted in the interviews was that the awareness of MPHIA among visitors to Banff was quite low. There is apparently little recognition among visitors of the benefits of choosing companies

employing MPHIA-trained guides, and thus a low incentive for companies to use these qualifications in promoting their services.

An increase in demand from Banff visitors to hire PI certified guides would impact MPHIA directly in terms of demand for its programs and both Parks Canada and Banff Tourism more generally, by providing a larger pool of qualified guides. Marketing MPHIA certified guides as a unique feature of the tourism product, may increase travelers interest in wanting to visit Banff, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where they are able to learn about the natural and cultural significance of the landscape from highly trained and professionally certified interpreters. This will assist in the vision created by the 2005 Banff Lake Louise Tourism Plan which states:

The Banff/Lake Louise destination is an icon for both our great country and the core values embraced by all Canadians. We will be internationally recognized as a preferred year round destination which offers an unparalleled visitor experience through our protected natural setting and our unique and dynamic tourism experiences. (p.15)

As further explained in this same document:

Travel consumers want to be “emotionally moved,” educated, challenged, involved, entertained, and even surprised. They are selecting travel destinations based on the delivery of “experiences” rather than the physical attributes of a resort, a city, a province, a country. At the heart of this demand are people who are willing to pay to participate in travel that offers something different, engaging experiences that go beyond traditional goods and services – representing opportunities for new travel programs, alliances, and packages. No longer can you compete in the global travel industry with a bigger hotel, a new chairlift, and improved roads. Destinations have to create and cultivate truly unique travel experiences, on an emotional, physical, intellectual, and even spiritual level. (Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau, 2005 Business Plan, p. 19 and 20)

Developing visitors’ awareness of the availability of PI certified guides, who have been trained “to engage a communication process that can forge emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience and the meanings inherent in the resource” (NAI, 2007,) may assist in positioning Banff as unique mountain-tourism destination that is aware of the emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual needs of today’s travelers.

Generating visitor demand for PI guided tours would encourage private businesses by creating pressure to preferentially hire PI's. With an increase in interest for PI tours, private business may be able to increase the price of a tour that is delivered by a PI guide. With an increase in demand, private business owners may be encouraged to compensate certified guides with more guaranteed hours, a higher hourly wage and other benefits. These actions would create an incentive for individual guides to register for MPHIA's programs and to become accredited by the Association. This process would help MPHIA create a larger membership base and achieve its mission:

To establish and maintain high standards in heritage interpretation in Canada's Rocky Mountain Parks. (MPHIA, 2007)

By Parks Canada and Banff Tourism developing a campaign to increase visitor awareness of guide certification would assist MPHIA in directing its role within the Banff community, to an Association that provides educational programming to advance the tourism product of Banff while simultaneously assisting the management directions of BNP. Tightening the relationship, specifically between MPHIA and Banff Tourism, would encourage a different perception of the Association's role within the Banff community. MPHIA may want to strengthen their connection by developing a larger breath of services and training programs aimed to attract a larger audience throughout the Banff community. One example is MPHIA's delivery of the 'Banff Best' course on behalf of the BHTC, which provides necessary information to new front line tourism employees in Banff. The success of this course indicates the potential for developing further programs to suit the needs of the tourism businesses in the Banff community, which may also assist in generating more interest and general awareness for MPHIA guide certification programs.

5.7. Challenges Found in Resort Communities that may Impact Professional Guides

While issues pertaining to course content, transferability, recognition and evaluation are important to guides, Banff also exhibits many of the challenges common to nature-based tourism communities worldwide. To ignore this broader context would result in a limited view of the stresses impacting individuals living and working in such places.

When speaking with board members and instructors of MPHIA, it was evident that the PI course and certification level, unlike the Standard and Basic programs, had been developed to be delivered to individuals choosing a career in interpretation. With a limited number of guides maintaining their affiliation with MPHIA, one question that needs to be answered is: Why are guides not choosing to continue a career in interpretation in the Bow Valley? Though members of the guiding population may be considered seekers in Adler and Aldler's (1999a) terminology and may specifically choose a peripatetic lifestyle, others may be impacted by factors that relate to the challenges of living in a resort community itself including seasonality of employment in the tourism industry and housing costs in tourism destinations.

5.7.1. Tourism Seasonality

Banff can be considered a mountain tourism destination with two peak seasons (Butler & Mao, 1997): a major summer tourist season followed by a minor winter one. Seasonality has been considered a distinctive feature of the tourism industry which has implications for recruiting and retaining full time staff (Krakover 2000; Butler, 1994). Comments by operation managers and owners in Banff indicated that this was a very real problem in recruiting and retaining qualified staff.

Tourism seasonality has impacts on the operating season and variability of business demand in a resort community throughout a year (Baum & Lundtorp, 2000). These fluctuations directly impact individual guides. According to the Alberta Recreation and Parks Association, nature-based guide salaries, depending on experience, often range between \$18,000 to \$32,000 Cdn. Dollars (Alberta Parks and Recreation Association, 2007). As explained by those interviewed in Banff, most guides and interpreters (working for either the public or private sector) are paid on an hourly basis. Positions are often designed as seasonal (summer or winter) contracts. The seasonality of tourism creates: unemployment during off-seasons, temporary outward migration, and short term employment rather than full time sustainable jobs (Baum & Lundtorp, 2000).

The lack of permanent full-time work can create challenges for guides living in a resort community to maintain a desirable standard of living. This may encourage guides to seek out other work opportunities. The absence of permanent long term employees has the potential to impact the standards in product and service quality throughout the tourism industry (Baum & Lundtorp, 2000). This would include challenges in creating a profession of interpretive guides capable of providing high quality interpretation to visitors of Banff National Park. The lack of permanent full-time work also impacts the ability for a professional interpretive guide to afford a suitable place to live.

5.7.2. Housing Costs

One of the challenges for those working in a resort community is finding affordable housing (Hettinger, 2005):

A vibrant tourism economy requires many classes of workers, including many who are paid relatively low wages...The attraction and retention of workers depends in large part on the availability of housing that workers of all wage levels can afford. (p. 108)

The Banff Housing Corporation was incorporated in 1993 to help ensure affordable housing for residents of the Town of Banff. Despite this initiative, a household survey of Banff's home-owners and renters conducted in 2002 concluded that the affordability and cost of housing was still one of the most important issues in the community (Family Community Support Services, 2006; Praxis, Inc, 2002). Though many local businesses in Banff and the Bow Valley provide staff accommodation for their entry level employees, it is unlikely to be the type of residence that would be appropriate for an individual choosing a career in the Bow Valley. The Town of Banff website provides an insight on what is to be expected for new members of the Banff community planning to reside in staff accommodation:

A lot of people living and working in Banff live in staff accommodation. Staff accommodation is generally much cheaper than having your own apartment or sharing a house. Typical rent is about \$210/month, which includes everything but food. Most staff accommodation facilities in Banff are dorm-style buildings. You will probably share one room with 2 or 3 people. You will most likely share bathrooms which are accessible to everyone on your floor, and a common living room with a TV. There are usually no cooking facilities and instead a common staff

cafeteria where you can get well-priced food. There is not a lot of privacy but it is great for meeting people and saving money. (Town of Banff, 2007a)

However, as noted by Mike an operations owner:

If someone is around for a few years and they want to rent a nice little apartment on their own, it is tough here. If they want to buy one it is almost impossible. That is how we lose all our staff you know. Like, if people want to get married or they want to start nesting with somebody, it costs too much to find a decent little place.

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defined a 32 per cent gross debt service ratio (GDS) as a standard affordability threshold for home ownership. As explained:

The 2002 Banff Housing Study observed that 27% of homeowners surveyed through the household survey were exceeding the 32% GDS ratio. By income bracket, homeowners with incomes of less than \$40,000 were most at risk for exceeding the 32% affordability threshold [see Figure 5.2]. Fifty percent of owners earning \$20,000-\$39,999, [which would be in the salary range of most nature-based guides] were spending more than 32% of their gross income on housing... Similar to the 32% GDS ratio for homeowners, there is a standard 30% GDS ratio for renters [see Figure 5.3] that is used by CMHC to determine the affordability of rental accommodations, (Community Social Assessment, 2006, p. 55)

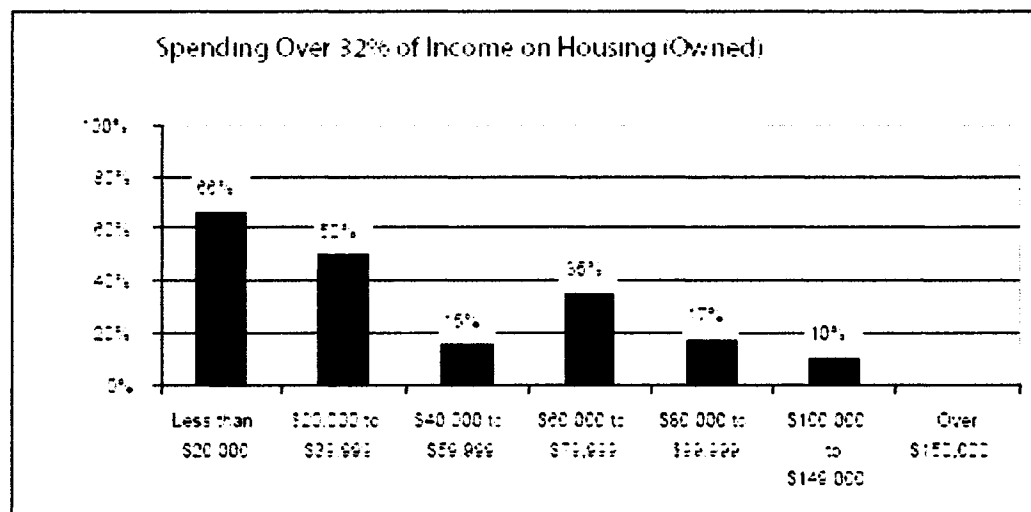


Figure 5.2. Homeowners of Banff Exceeding 32 per cent GDS Ratio

From Family and Community Support Services, 2006, p.55.

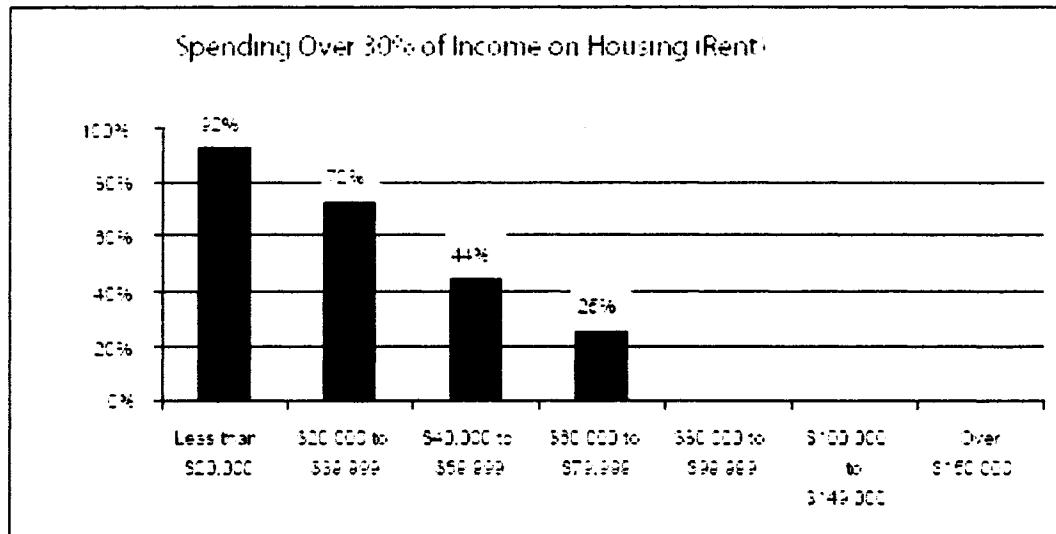


Figure 5.3. Renters of Banff Exceeding 30 per cent GDS Ratio

From Family and Community Support Services, 2006, p.55.

The Town of Banff could be considered a unique real estate market due to the “need to reside clause” which limits who can live in the community. Essentially to have the right to live in Banff, one must either own and operate a business in the park or must work as an employee for such an establishment (Town of Banff, 2007b). The costs of living in the Town of Banff however, and the impact it places on those working in the community can be considered similar to other resort communities. Kettinger’s (2005) book entitled *Living and Working in Paradise* explores the housing situation in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada and other North American resort locations and expresses how the lack of suitable housing that workers can afford has a direct impact on the success of the tourism destination.

Statistics Canada (2001) estimated that the average private home in Banff costs \$372, 865 which is considerably higher than the average dwelling cost in Alberta of \$159,698 (Family Community Support Services, 2006). Regardless of the difference, Banff’s housing costs are much beyond what an average guide can afford on his/her salary. The challenge of obtaining suitable housing which is compounded by

the difficulties that have been discussed with respect to tourism seasonality may play a significant role in PI guides leaving the Bow Valley and not maintaining their membership in MPHIA.

Alleviating the difficulties for individual guides that are associated with both tourism seasonality and the cost of living in Banff is beyond MPHIA's scope. But, understanding the potential of these stressors to impact an individual guide's choices is important so that the Parks Canada, and Banff Tourism and businesses can be realistic as to the level of commitment to the qualification system expected of guides.

5.8. Summation

This research into stakeholders' perceptions of an interpretation accreditation scheme in Banff, Canada has revealed a number of areas of concern both locally and more generally with such schemes.

Although overall there was a general acceptance of the need for MPHIA and its programs among stakeholders, some specific criticisms were voiced in regard to content, evaluation and transferability. These concerns were linked with a lack of commitment and involvement among guides compounded by the casual and peripatetic nature of employees and the insecurity and seasonal nature of employment in the guiding field.

A rather too close relationship between Park Canada and MPHIA was perceived by some as affecting the latter's independence and created the perception of the Association as a regulatory arm of the Agency. Extended connections with the Banff community in terms of the development of the 'Banff's Best' program and closer ties with the Heritage Association's Awards system have the potential to reduce this perceived dependency, enhance the sustainability and independence of the Association and somewhat distance it from its role as sole-provider to the management of Banff National Park.

A sore point among operators at the present time is the Parks Canada requirement on the number of PI guides needed to operate in the Park. This creates a problem for many operators which flows over into MPHIA, as there are too few PI qualified employees currently available to meet the demand by

operators. A somewhat more flexible system using a progressive mix of standard and PI qualified staff to accredit operators at various levels may be more suitable in the current circumstances (e.g., EcoCertification Program, Australia). This issue is somewhat allied to the lack of profile of the MPHIA qualifications in general and the PI certification in particular among visitors to Banff, which compounds the credibility and commitment issues among guides and employees mentioned earlier.

A final and more intransigent issue relates to the characteristics of employment in the tourism industry and to the characteristics of resort towns themselves. Low salaries, insecure employment, poor career opportunities, high living costs and expensive housing combine to make life in a community like Banff more appealing to young, peripatetic, seasonal employees. Such employees are unlikely to be highly motivated to invest in the necessary effort and expense to undertake advanced qualifications which are non-transferable and largely unrecognized outside Banff National Park and not widely appreciated within the visiting public.

One approach to this issue may be through developing partnerships within the Banff guiding community, to help promote MPHIA and PI certification. By MPHIA developing a role within the Banff community that is perceived as providing education, training and tourism product development will help generate more interest in MPHIA's programs and the Associations overall success. This may be achieved by modifying some of its existing relationships with members of the Banff guiding community. Encouraging a stronger relationship with the individual guides in the Banff community, by altering or adding additional courses and services to suit their needs, may be the first step that MPHIA will need to take to help ensure a stronger membership base and the success of a professional guiding association in nature-based guiding community.

CHAPTER SIX: FINAL THOUGHTS

6.1. Introduction

Just as all horse, hiking and scenic tours in Banff National Park must come to an end, so too has this research project. When working as a guide in Banff, I often wondered about my tours and specifically, what my guests would remember from our time together. If a focus of my tour had been on glaciers, I would wonder if any of my participants really listened to what I had said, about how fast these bodies of ice had been retreating. At the same time, I would also speculate on how much fun my guests had had that day? It was a common practice with one of the companies I worked for to give out comment cards for the guests to fill out at the end of each tour. I remember waiting, sometimes with a feeling of apprehension, to find out how my guests rated their tour with me. Did they feel the tour was a quality experience? Would they recommend it to their friends? What aspects of the tour did they feel could have been improved?

On concluding this research I wonder what the answers will be to similar questions. I ask myself: What were the limitations of this project and how could it have been enhanced? What has my research revealed? How may the results be used to enhance the interpretive tour guiding profession and inform further the research in this and allied fields? And finally, what other questions on this topic are still left unanswered? This chapter draws upon these questions to leave my final thoughts with the reader.

6.2. Perceived Limitations of this Research

Reflecting on the limitations of this study brings to light my own personal limitation as a researcher, as well as the decisions made regarding the research method. Each of these limitations and their potential to impact the results of this study will be discussed below.

6.2.1. Personal Limitations

Qualitative studies often are noted as having limitations in regards to objectivity, as they rely on subjective interpretation (Patton, 2002). However to claim objectivity would be to ignore the shared

realities between the researcher and the participant. As a resident of Banff and a practicing guide in the National Park working for private tour companies, I bring a great deal of personal insight into the understanding of the Banff guiding community. Over the years I have developed tacit knowledge on professional guiding certification and how it affects members of the guiding community. It might be argued that I have considerable vested interest in the outcome of this study as I am not presently certified by MPHIA. However, I have endeavoured, at least in the interview and analyses, to set aside my personal bias and agendas and have tried to be open and attentive to my informants' stories. I do believe that my connection with the guiding community in Banff helped increase the level of connection with those interviewed and allowed for a thorough understanding of the complexities of this case and the ability to interpret appropriately the essences of each stakeholder and the connections between them.

6.2.2. Limitations of the Research Method

In planning this research, I decided to choose informants by purposively focusing on those who would best reflect the diversity of stakeholders of MPHIA within the Banff guiding community. As explained by Patton (2002), the sample was based on the expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon (p.246). Initially, it was decided that guides, the management of private guiding business, board members of MPHIA and Parks Canada representation would be sought out to be interviewed. It was hoped that those selected would reflect the members of the guiding community and would provide insight into the perceptions of the programs and services offered by the Association. It was important to me to choose guides and managers of private tour businesses that specialized in different guiding roles in the park. For example, the hiking, scenic bus, Japanese, horse, angling guides and the Parks Canada Interpreter all had varying levels of involvement with MPHIA's programs. I wanted to ensure a diversity of perspectives on MPHIA was included in my sample of informants.

However, having only undertaken fourteen interviews from varying members of the Banff guiding community, it is conceded that my findings are likely to be limited. As explained by Creswell (2003),

purposive sampling decreases the generalisability of findings (p.148). Were all types of guides, and private guiding business that operate in Banff represented in my study? Does one Parks Canada Interpreter, or one Japanese guide feel the same as all of his or her colleagues? The answer to both these questions is likely negative.

In retrospect, I would have liked to have interviewed a rafting guide and an ACMG backpacking guide as they may have provided additional perspectives on MPHIA and the role it plays in BNP. This study may also be limited due to the fact that only summer guides were interviewed. The research may have benefited from interviewing snowshoeing or cross country ski guides and winter tourism operators. It would have been preferable to have interviewed more female guides. In the field, I did try to contact and arrange interviews with more female guides but due to their schedules and other time commitments the interviews did not transpire. Finally, in light of my findings, on the importance of developing stronger relationships with Banff Tourism, my study would have benefited from interviewing a member of the Banff Lake Louise Tourism Bureau and/or a representative from the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation.

Although, it is somewhat easy to reflect at the end of one's research on what one could have done, or who they could have also interviewed, I also do feel that my sample represents a significant proportion of the diversity in the Banff Guiding Community.

The semi-structured interview approach also allowed me to explore and gain a variety of perspectives. Generating a list of critical questions enabled me to draw out the essences and main themes concerning MPHIA and its role in the Banff community. This method, in common with other interview-based research, is subject to both limitations and delimitations. Interviews in general have been noted as providing indirect information which is filtered through the views of the informants. This can be seen as problematic as the researcher's presence has the potential to bias respondents answers and people are considered to not be equally articulate or perceptive (Creswell, 2003) However, the

advantages of interviewing outweigh the disadvantages in that it provides access to a participants experiences of the lived reality of the case being studied and their feelings and thoughts about this may, as a consequence, be more fully explored.

In qualitative research, a common concern is what some perceive as threats to validity and reliability. However, these criteria need to be articulated more in terms of the research conduct and findings being judged as credible, consistent with the reality of the situation, and plausible (Golafshani, 2003). By incorporating concepts such as reflexivity, maximum variation through purposive sampling, by choosing a semi-structured approach to the interviews, and by making a conscious effort to gain a thorough understanding of the views presented on MPHIA, I believe my research was credible in its conduct, and consistent with my and my informants' understandings of the context.

6.3. Research Accomplishments and Future Research

The main purpose of this research was to explore stakeholders' perceptions of a professional association that offered interpretive guide certification in a nature-based tourism context. More specifically the objectives of this research were:

- To review certification systems for interpretive guides that have been developed in nature-based tourism in park settings
- To explore key stakeholders' perceptions of the MPHIA accreditation system for interpretive guides
- To further develop understanding of professional guiding associations and professional guiding certification

Few studies have previously undertaken such an in-depth study of the practical relationships between a professional guiding association and its clients. In this regard, this research has provided insight from the Banff experience on the various processes used to ensure quality in nature-based tour guiding. I maintain that this research on the perceptions of stakeholders' of the Banff guiding

community of MPHIA will benefit the broader community of resort towns that have implemented or are planning to implement similar quality assurance mechanisms.

This study set out to address a perceived lack of research on stakeholders' views about certification and the effectiveness of methods to assure quality in guiding industries worldwide, (Black & Weiler, 2005; Black & Ham 2005). An in-depth interview study of the Banff experience revealed a complex mix of challenges faced by the accrediting association including: the specifics of curriculum and its evaluation; managing the many and varied needs and demands of stakeholders; dealing with the ambiguity created by the necessity to juggle quality assurance, community credibility and regulation; and more generally, attempting to accommodate the peculiarities of a peripatetic workforce and the stresses they experience in living and working in an exclusive mountain resort community

Black and Ham's (2005) article on the EcoGuide program of Australia promoted that system as useful model for others contemplating the development of a guide certification system. Their article stated that:

although differences both between and within countries will strongly influence the content and specific elements of a guide certification programme that will work best in each place, lessons extracted from the Australian experience in developing its EcoGuide Certification Program may be applicable in most places. (Black & Ham, 2005, p. 189)

The failure in the Australian context to mention or address many of the issues and problems raised by the informants to this research suggests either that these do not exist in the Australian situation, which seems unlikely, or that they have been overlooked. For example, the issue of tourism seasonality and its associated impacts on retaining qualified staff and its effects on participation and commitment to guide certification programs and professional development more generally, which was touched on in this study, would be a fruitful area for future research in other contexts.

Beyond providing insight into both the academic community and the nature-based guiding industry, this project specifically aimed at providing MPHIA and the guiding community in Banff, with recommendations that may enhance understanding of specifics related to programming and

implementation and, beyond that, provide an overview of the accreditation process more generally and its implications for the future development of the system in Banff.

6.4. Recommendations to Enhance MPHIA's Role within the Banff Guiding Community

In regards to MPHIA's educational training programs:

- Consider developing additional programs that would be perceived by guides as skill development training. Training that is geared towards increasing their level of general core competencies in the guiding industry. Skills that would be considered to assist them in continuing a career in guiding within and beyond the Rocky Mountain Parks.
- Consider developing additional programs that would attract a larger audience base, beyond the individual guides, and would be seen as providing educational and training development programs for the broader tourism community in Banff and beyond.
- Consider developing strategies to create recognition of MPHIA certifications throughout the Parks Canada system and beyond.
- Consider developing stronger relationships with nationally recognized interpretation associations such as the National Association of Interpretation to enhance transferability.

In regards to the evaluation procedures for the PI level of Accreditation:

- Consider creating workplace assessments to evaluate both the practical interpretation skills, and group management skills of guides who are presently working in BNP.
- Implement both the written and oral examinations in French.

In regards to Parks Canada licensing requirements:

- Re-assess the requirement that two-thirds of private hiking businesses' guides must be certified at the PI Level.
- Consider licensing requirements for hiking companies be based on the necessity of all guides to have completed the Standard Level of certification.
- Consider developing licensing requirements for step-on and scenic tour guides, to a mandatory Standard Level of certification.

In regards to the development of relationships within the Banff guiding community:

- Consider encouraging best practice in the guiding industry by increasing the community's and visitor awareness of the awards of excellence that are administered through the Banff Heritage Tourism Corporation (BHTC).

- Ensure that the awards of excellence that are given out by the BHTC correspond with MPHIA's certification programs and Parks Canada's licensing requirements.
- Consider the development of a promotional strategy with the collaborative efforts of MPHIA, Parks Canada and Banff Tourism to create visitor demand for MPHIA trained, PI certified guides.
- Consider diversifying MPHIA's programs and services to attract a larger audience base within the Banff community

The Association along with stakeholders of the Banff guiding community may want to further discuss these recommendations which have been highlighted to assist in further developing the most appropriate method(s) to ensure the quality of interpretive guiding in BNP.

6.5. Conclusion

This research has contributed not only to a better understanding about the specifics of guide training, but also it has highlighted the complex social environment in which this most central of roles in a tourism community is enacted. Further, it has given voice to the many and varied issues and concerns that individual guides, operators and accreditors face on a day-to day basis. These same voices while, at times, expressing criticisms and frustrations with the accreditation process, have also recognized the achievements and triumphs of a guiding community pioneering the development of a world-class quality assurance system.

The continuing, reflexive development of such a system is essential, as emphasized by the comments of so many in the guiding community, and reaffirmed by research on the benefits of providing interpretation in PPA's and tourism more generally. As a nature-based tourism community, we must strive to find the best means to ensure quality in the messages that are being delivered by guides to visitors. By doing so, benefits will accrue to all members of the guiding community, our visitors will have more informative and entertaining experiences and, not coincidentally, the preservation of our national heritage will be enhanced.

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Appendix A: Consent Letter

Dear Participant:

Thank you for volunteering to take part in a study concerning Banff National Park guiding community's perception of the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association.

The intent of this research is to explore the perceptions among stakeholders (individual guides, operation owners and managers, Parks Canada, and MPHIA's directors) of the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association. (Looking specifically at perceptions of MPHIA's accreditation programs, standards, and training.) An understanding of these perceptions will aid in enhancing the overall effectiveness of training and contribute to better interpretive guiding in the Rocky Mountain national parks.

By volunteering to participate in this research, you agree to be involved in a personal interview with the lead researcher. The interview could range from 60 to 90 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The interview will be conducted at a mutually acceptable time and place in Banff National Park. A second interview may also be required for follow up purposes. This second interview would take place over the phone or by email.

All information from interviews will be kept in separate files during the study in order to maintain complete confidentiality and anonymity. Only myself (Rosanna Maunder) and my academic supervisor (Dr. Norm McIntyre of Lakehead University) will have access to the original transcribed data. You are not required to give any identifying information. You may withdraw from the study at any time with no questions asked. The information from all surveys and interviews will be coded, analyzed and securely stored at Lakehead University for seven years. No individual without specific and formal consent will be identified in any report of the results.

The results of this study will be shared with Lakehead University, the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) and the guiding community of Banff where a power point presentation will be produced from the findings. A summary of the report may be obtained from the lead researcher on request and will be sent to you via email or mail on completion of the project (summer of 2007).

All answers are acceptable; the researcher is interested in your point of view and your honesty will be appreciated.

I look forward to your participation in this exciting research endeavor. If you have any questions concerning this study, I can be reached at (403) 762-2015 (throughout the months of May, June July and August, 2006) or via email at rmaunder@lakeheadu.ca or (807) 345-6986 after August 2006.

Sincerely,

Rosanna Maunder
Master's Candidate of Environmental Studies;
Nature-Based Recreation and Tourism
Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON

Appendix B: Consent Form

My signature on this sheet indicates that I agree to participate in a study by Rosanna Maunder, on *Perceptions of the Mountain Parks Heritage Interpretation Association, and Interpretation Accreditation System*. My signature on this sheet also indicates that I understand the following:

1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.
2. I am 18 years of age or older.
3. I have not been coerced or intimidated into participating in this research.
4. There is no apparent risk of physical or psychological harm to my person.
5. The interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed
6. The data I provide will remain confidential and anonymous.
7. I can access a copy of the project results, upon request, in the spring or early summer of 2007.
8. The information I give will be stored at Lakehead University for 7 years and then destroyed.

I have received explanations about the nature of the study, its purpose and procedures.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix C: Check list of Critical Questions for Individual Guides

Interview Questions for Guides

Introductory questions	Training Questions	MPHIA Questions
How did you come to be a (rafting, hiking, scenic, horseback riding) guide in Banff National Park?	How were you prepared to work as guide in this position? (Did you take courses, did you receive training from your employer, and do you feel you gained this position based on past experience?)	How have you been involved with the MPHIA? (Have you taken courses, if so what did you think of them, are you accredited why/why not, are you a member?)
How long have you lived in the Banff area?	Do you have on-going training for your role as a guide?	What is your understanding of the mission and objectives of MPHIA?
Do you have experience being a guide in other settings? (In National Parks, Canada, in other countries)	If someone was new to this position what do you think they would need to learn? What would be the most important? How would they learn these skills/ knowledge?	What are your thoughts on the regulation of interpretative guiding?
Did you go to school or do you have a certain educational background that directed you towards a job in guiding?	If you were to think of three words to describe the skills needed to do your position what would they be?	In what ways has the accreditation and training programs offered by MPHIA affected your job?
What are the best aspects of your job? What are areas that you would like to see improved?	How does interpretation fit into your role as a guide?	What do you see as the future for MPHIA in BNP?
How long do you see yourself working in the guiding industry?	How would you define the word interpretation?	If you had power to make changes to the program, what would you make different?

What should I ask you that I didn't think to ask?

Appendix D: Check list of Critical Questions for Owners and Managers of Guiding Operations

Interview Questions for Ops Owners & Managers		
Introduction Questions	Training Questions	MPHIA Questions
How did you come to be a (rafting, hiking, scenic, horseback riding) operations manager/owner in Banff National Park?	What attributes do you look for when hiring staff to work for your company?	How have you personally and your company been involved with the MPHIA?
How long have you lived in the Banff area?	If someone was new to a guiding position within your company what do you think they would need to learn?	Do you encourage your staff to take courses through MPHIA? How would you rate MPHIA's training/ educational programs
Do you have experience being a guiding operations manager /owner in other settings? (In National Parks, Canada, in other countries)	What skills do you think are the most important in your staff? If you were to think of three words to describe the skills needed to work as a guide for your company what would they be?	Do you look for MPHIA accreditation when hiring? (How much significance does that play in hiring/ recruiting staff?) Do you look for staff to be accredited by any other guiding standards (if so which ones)?
Did you have a certain educational background that directed you towards owning this company/ managing the operations of this company?	How would your staff learn these skills/ knowledge? How do you prepare guides to work for your company? (Do you offer introductory training programs?)	Are staff compensated by being accredited by MPHIA or other guiding affiliations?
What are the best aspects of your job? What are areas that you would like to see improved?	How does interpretation fit into the role as a guide for your company?	What is your understanding of the mission and objectives of MPHIA?
How long do you see yourself working in the guiding industry?	How would you define the word interpretation?	Has MPHIA affected your operations (if so, how so)?
		What do you see as the future for MPHIA in BNP? If you had power to make changes to the program, what would you make different?

What should I ask you that I didn't think to ask?

Appendix E: Breakdown of Initial Themes

Major Themes	Educational Programming	Regulation of MPHIA standards	Relationships with Banff Guiding Community
Sub-themes	<u>Courses</u> PI Standard Basic Banff's Best Group Management. Instructors Participants	<u>Image</u> Regulator Educator Tourism	<u>Partners</u> Parks Canada Banff Tourism Individual Business Bow Valley Naturalists ACMG
	<u>Evaluation</u> Standard Certification PI Accreditation Oral Exam Written Exam Master Interpreters	<u>Checking Procedures</u> Hiking Guides Guides Cards Business License On Trails	<u>Members</u> Corporate Membership Individual Membership
	<u>Knowledge Standards</u> Development Of KS for levels	<u>Number of Accredited Guides</u> PI	<u>MPHIA Board</u> Past Present Changes
	<u>Language Offerings</u> Course in Japanese Exams in Japanese Course/ Exams in French	<u>Basic Course Requirements</u> Necessity	<u>Executive Director</u> Past Present
	<u>Other</u> On-line learning Manual Field trips On-going learning	<u>Other</u> Step-On Guides Regulation Impact on Stakeholders	<u>Other</u> Rocky Mountain Parks

Appendix F: MPHIA Professional Interpreter Point System

MPHIA PROFESSIONAL INTERPRETER POINT SCHEDULE

Requirements	Number of Points	Maximum Number of Points
MPHIA COURSE		
MPHIA Professional Interpreters Course	5 Points	Total Points 5
Direct Work Experience		
<i>Guided Activities see below for how hours are calculated</i>		
Interpretation	1 point/10 hours	
Guiding	1 point/10 hours	
Teaching/ Instruction	1 point/ 10 hours	
ACMG		
ACMG Mountain Guide	20 points	
ACMG Hiking/ Backpacking	5 points	
Warden Service	2 points/per month	
Other Experience		
Information Service Attendent	2 points/per month	
Written Work	Assessed	
Other Related Experience	Assessed	Total Points 160
Formal Education		
Post-Secondary		
Universtiy/ College/ Technical	5 poitns per semester 40 points max	
Outdoor Education Programs	5 points per semester 40 points max	
Post-Graduate		
Second degree		
Graduate Degree	10 Points Max	Total Points 50
MPHIA Exams		
MPHIA Standard Apprentice Accreditation	5 Points total Passing Mark 70%	
MPHIA Written Test	1 point/ % test-Passing Mark 70%	
MPHIA Oral Test	1 point/ % test-Passing Mark 70%	
Professional Interpreter Accreditation Certification		Total Points 300

From "MPHIA Professional Interpreter Point System," Retrieved on March 28, 2007,
http://www.mphia.org/professional_accreditation.html#point