



Exploring a Career in Thompson Okanagan's Tourism Industry

A guide to exciting job opportunities in tourism



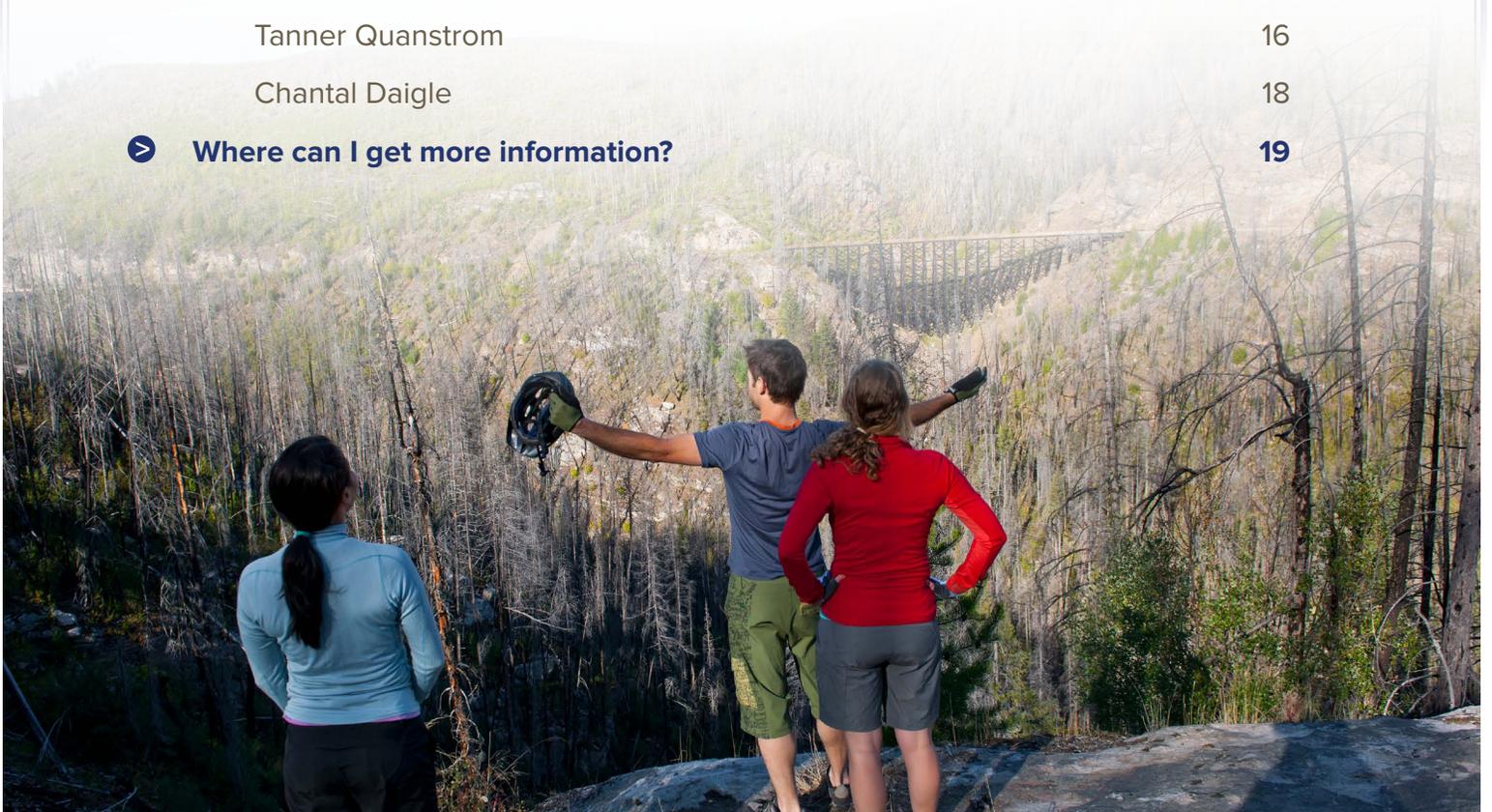
Thompson Okanagan
Tourism Association



The resource for people in Tourism

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Tourism Career Guide for Youth

Whether you're still in school, just graduated, or have been in the workforce for a while, you're probably making plans for the future.

Do you want to study, travel, work for a season, or dive into a full-time career? Are you also looking to enjoy what you do, work with great people, and have a chance to grow and develop your skills in the job?

If this sounds like you, consider a career in the Thompson Okanagan tourism industry. With four ski resorts, 50 golf courses, and hundreds of resorts, restaurants, attractions and wineries in the region, there are thousands of job openings. Whether you like working directly with people or behind the scenes, there's a job here for you.



The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Industry

The Thompson Okanagan region, in Southern British Columbia, extends from the Canadian Rockies, through BC's lake and wine country to Canada's only desert. From beaches to ski slopes, the Thompson Okanagan is a four-season destination.

The region also rivals California's Napa Valley and Australia's Clare Valley for its world-class wineries and warm temperatures. In winter, four full-service ski resorts boast thick falls of Champagne powder. Outdoor activities, from biking and hiking to camping and fishing, are a key part of life here.



FAQs: Why work in the tourism industry?

- What do you love? Snowboarding, climbing, kayaking? You can turn that into a job and work in some amazing places. You can get paid for your passion.
- Working in the tourism industry allows you to have flexible hours, so you can earn money while you study or pursue other interests. Tourism is a great industry for work-life balance.
- You'll work with a team of people who share your passions.
- You'll get to meet and interact with people from around the world and help make their travel experience amazing.
- If you like work that's fast-paced, varied and team-oriented, tourism is a good choice for you.
- You are in demand! By 2020, it's projected that there will be over 100,000 new tourism jobs in BC.
- The Thompson Okanagan region is expected to have 12,334 new job openings with a labour shortage of 1,626.



WHAT EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING DO I NEED?

Not all tourism jobs require prior experience or education. You will have the opportunity to grow and learn new skills on the job, such as customer service and team-building skills, and gain leadership experience in dynamic, challenging and fun workplaces.

If you already have post-secondary education in tourism, culinary arts, hospitality, business or related fields, you'll be able to fast track your career in tourism.

WHAT ABOUT MY LONG TERM CAREER?

Flexible hours mean you can earn money while you go to school, whether that's for a tourism credential or in another field.

- Tourism jobs are a great way to gain entry level experience and build your resume and portfolio.
- Everything you learn and experience in the tourism industry is transferable: customer service, teamwork, problem solving, and thinking on your feet apply in every career.
- The skills and experience you gain can help you grow in the job you have, move into different sectors in tourism, start a different career altogether, or even travel and work overseas.
- While working in the tourism industry, you'll have a chance to meet and make valuable connections with other industry people.

WHAT KINDS OF JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?

- With over 400 occupations across five industry sectors (accommodations, food & beverage services, transportation, travel services, and recreation & entertainment), the tourism industry offers a wide range of job opportunities. There's bound to be several that appeal to your interests, skills and long-term plans.
- And not all jobs are front-line customer-service related. Tourism also needs people in IT, finance, marketing and skilled trades.
- The Thompson Okanagan, as a four-season, outdoor-focused destination, offers a wealth of exciting jobs. Imagine, for example:
 - > Developing lasting friendships working at a ski resort;
 - > Enjoying the outdoors while leading boat tours, parasailing rides, mountain treks, bike rides, or zip-lining adventures;
 - > Preparing or serving organic, farm-to-table meals; and
 - > Introducing visitors to local craft beer and estate wines.

I'M INTERESTED. WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

Have a look at the resources below to find out more about jobs available and how to connect with employers.



Career Planning Guide

Looking for a job can be both exciting and intimidating, especially if you're new to the industry or just starting out.

The good news is that, with current labour shortages, you are in demand. Tourism employers are looking for young people, including students, recent graduates and people transitioning from other industries, who can learn and grow in the job.



➤ 1. DECIDE WHAT KIND OF JOB YOU'D LIKE TO DO

The first step is to determine which of the over 400 occupations available in tourism you're interested in and qualified for.

A good place to start is to visit [go2HR's Career Explorer](#).

With the [Career Explorer](#), you can search for information about the many tourism jobs available in BC. You'll find job descriptions, career profiles, training information, job-search tips, and current job openings for a range of career options.

You can look for jobs in any of the five sectors; here are some ideas:

Industry Sector	Where you can work	What you can do
Accommodations	bed & breakfasts, campgrounds, lodges, hotels, motels, resorts	campground operator, concierge, front desk agent, night auditor, reservation sales agent, room attendant
Food & Beverage Services	cafés, caterers, dining rooms, lounges, night clubs, pubs, restaurants, wineries	bartender, catering manager, chef, cook, food service supervisor, server, sommelier, tasting room associate
Recreation & Entertainment	Aboriginal tourism attractions, casinos, ecotourism operations, fishing areas, galleries, golf courses, heritage & historical sites, hunting facilities, parks, museums, ski resorts, theatres	casino dealer, fishing & hunting guide, golf course attendant, golf pro, groundskeeper, guide outfitter, heritage interpreter, maintenance worker, outdoor adventure guide, ski instructor, tour guide
Transportation	airlines, bus tour companies, houseboat rentals, railways, rental car companies	limousine driver, motor coach driver, pilot, reservations sales agent, shuttle driver, step on guide, tour escort
Travel Services	destination marketing organizations, government agencies, tour companies, travel agencies, visitor centres	event planner, tourism researcher, tour operator, travel agent, visitor information counsellor

Don't forget that the tourism industry also needs people in IT, finance, accounting, human resources, marketing and trades, etc. If you prefer to stay behind the scenes, there is also something for you!

➤ 2. FIND OUT WHAT SKILLS, QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE YOU NEED

Check out [go2HR's Career Explorer](#) and other resources, such as job ads and the industry organizations listed below in section 6 under “Start Networking”, to find out what specific skills, credentials and experience are needed for the job you’re interested in.

Consider also setting up an informational interview. That’s where you find someone working in the job you want and talk to them about what’s needed. With an informational interview, you’re not applying for a job — you’re just doing research. It’s also a valuable way to build your network within the industry.

Most jobs require a mix of formal qualifications, such as a high school diploma, FOODSAFE, SuperHost or Serving It Right, and personal skills, such as the ability to work in a team or take initiative. More senior positions may also require a post-secondary diploma or degree.

➤ 3. CONNECT YOUR EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATIONS TO THE JOB REQUIREMENTS

The key here is to think about transferable skills, especially any experience you’ve had in customer service, teamwork, and helping people try new things. Draw on skills you’ve gained in school, volunteer work, travel, sports and hobbies as well as in paid work.

Remember that industry-specific training and qualifications are not always necessary. Many tourism employers are more concerned about an applicant’s potential and personal traits, such as a good attitude, a work ethic, and experience in working with the public. For entry level jobs, employers are usually happy to find the right people and train them if necessary.

In addition, some qualifications are fairly easy to acquire. Serving It Right, for example, is required for any job that involves serving alcohol and can be completed online in a few hours. SuperHost, customer service training for front-line staff, can be completed in a classroom or online at your own pace.

“You work hard, you show enthusiasm, and we’ll spend that time and we’ll teach you and get you there. We have people here who’ve worked here many years, who started at the junior level, and they are a part of our management team now and that’s wonderful!” – Michael Harris, Director of Operations, Quails’ Gate Winery

➤ 4. CREATE YOUR TOOL KIT: YOUR RESUME, COVER LETTER AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Resume

- > A resume is the foundation of any successful job search, and it's worth spending some time on it.
- > Provide details of any jobs you've had, including part-time and volunteer work. Focus on measurable results and accomplishments (such as increasing sales or receiving great online reviews) rather than just listing your duties.
- > One of the most important things to do, especially if you are just starting out in tourism, is to include examples of transferable skills. Any experience in working with the public, customer service, teamwork, multi-tasking, problem solving, and helping people feel comfortable are all assets to highlight.
- > Include your education towards the bottom of the resume. Also include any tourism-related training or certificates, such as FOODSAFE, Serving It Right, SuperHost, or first aid, as well as language skills and any relevant hobbies and volunteer activities.
- > Keep your resume two pages or less.

Contact information

- > Include your email address and phone number at the top of both your resume and cover letter — make it easy for employers to contact you.
- > The outgoing message on your voicemail should include your full name; it should also be recorded in a quiet place with no background noise.
- > If you can, use your own cellphone number and an email address which includes your name (such as janedoe@gmail.com).

Cover letter

A cover letter is customized and written specifically for each application. It connects the dots on your resume, highlights skills and experience that are most relevant to the job, and positions you as the best candidate for the job.

- > Include a sentence in each cover letter explaining why you want to work at that particular company, and make it specific to that organization. Demonstrate that you know something about the company or job and what appeals to you about working there.
- > Keep your cover letter to one page and use bullet points or short paragraphs.



Make sure that both your cover letter and resume are free of spelling and grammatical errors. It helps to have someone else proofread them for you.

Format your resume and cover letter as a PDF unless otherwise stated; in which case, follow the application instructions.

Having a strong resume and cover letter will help you land an in-person interview where you can let your skills and personality shine.

> 5. CHECK YOUR ONLINE BRAND

As part of your job search, do some housekeeping on your social media presence. Prospective employers may Google your name and check your Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and other social media channels; make sure they like what they see.

The basic advice for everyone is to remove any pictures of partying, don't tweet inappropriately, and make your profiles private.

You can also take it a step further and let social media work for you to create a good impression on potential employers.



For example:

- > A student hoping to work at a ski resort changed her Facebook profile picture to a shot of herself on her snowboard. She cleaned up all her personal photo albums (read: no partying) and sprinkled in shots of herself enjoying wholesome downtime at the resort.
- > A graduate interested in festivals started a blog highlighting his events experiences – including postings (with pictures) about each event he'd volunteered or worked at. He placed a link to the blog in a PDF of his resume so employers could access it in one click.

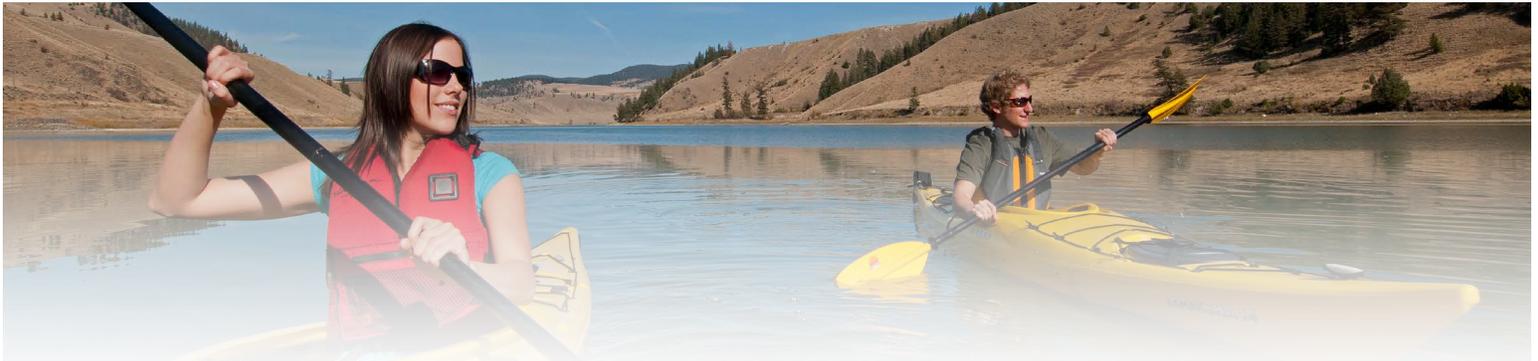
> 6. START NETWORKING



Tourism and hospitality jobs are fundamentally about people. So, it makes sense that one of the greatest resources as you begin your career is networking and connecting with people who can assist with your goals.

- > If you have friends, family friends, or acquaintances in the industry, let them know you are interested in a tourism job.
- > Set up a LinkedIn profile – it's free and focused on work connections.
- > It helps to connect with people online, but face-to-face contacts are usually the most effective in making an impression and creating connections.
- > Start making industry contacts through conducting informational interviews as well as attending career fairs and industry events.
- > If you're in school, find out about school-related work experience opportunities, such as internships and work experience programs.
- > Consider getting involved with relevant industry groups such as sector associations, chambers of commerce, or destination marketing associations; they may offer discounted student memberships. Destination BC's list of [industry partners](#) is a great place to start.

➤ 7. PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS



All the work of preparing a resume and networking should lead to some interview requests. The best way to succeed in an interview is to arrive prepared.

Before the interview

- > Research the organization, the people you will be meeting, and the job you are applying for.
- > Know your resume back to front and be prepared to explain how your skills match the job and how your personality will fit into the culture.
- > Prepare answers to the questions that most interviewers ask. You'll probably be asked to describe at least three personal strengths and three personal weaknesses, as well as how you are working to improve in these areas.
- > Be prepared for scenario-based interview questions – questions that ask how you have handled certain situations. You should be able to predict some of these questions based on the job you've applied for. For instance, if you are interviewing for a hotel front desk clerk position, you should expect questions about customer service, teamwork, flexibility, working under pressure, multi-tasking and handling conflict. Before the interview, spend some time thinking about your experience in these situations so that examples come quickly to mind when needed. Remember that you may have encountered these situations outside of paid employment, for example, at school or in teams or volunteer work.
- > You can find many excellent interview preparation articles online by Googling "Job Interview Questions".
- > Stay positive about former employers and co-workers.
- > Prepare some questions of your own, either about the job or about the organization. Show you've done some research; if you can find it online, don't ask it.
- > Practice interview demeanour. This includes speaking clearly, making eye contact, and curbing nervous habits such as nail biting or hair tugging. If you have any doubts about the way you present yourself, ask a friend to run through a mock interview and provide feedback.

At the interview

- > Be on time: an employer needs to know you'll arrive at work on time.
- > Dress professionally: whether you're applying at a four-star hotel or a family-owned kayak business, dressing up for an interview is an excellent way to show your commitment to the job. You don't need to wear a business suit unless you are applying for a management position, but even in a job where you will be dressed casually you should wear business attire to the interview. This includes a collared shirt, dress pants or a skirt, polished shoes and neat hair and nails. (If you're not sure about what to wear, Google for suggestions). You should also remove facial piercings or replace them with studs, and don't wear scents (some people are allergic).
- > Demonstrate that you have done some research and that you have spent time thinking about the role.
- > Remember that hiring is a two-way process — you also need to feel comfortable with the employer and the job.
- > Avoid asking about pay or benefits at your first interview. You need this information, but you don't want to leave the impression that this is all you care about. If the process includes more than one interview, then it's best to leave this question for the second interview. Otherwise, leave this discussion until after you've received a job offer.
- > If the information isn't volunteered, you may ask for details about the next steps in the interview process.

After the interview

- > Follow up after the interview with a short email thanking the interviewers for their time.

“What we do in tourism is other people’s vacation... Maybe you are guiding a canoe trip, or a kayak, or zipline tours, that doesn’t really feel like work. You love what you do and you don’t have to work a day in your life. I don’t think there’s a more true industry than the tourism industry to embody that.” – Jesse Ziercke, Resort Manager, Quaaout Lodge

Career Success Stories

HALEY LONSDALE

Assistant General Manager,
Sparkling Hill Resort



An exciting new job and a community famous for its work life balance inspired hotel professional Haley Lonsdale to make the move from Vancouver to Vernon.

Lonsdale, a University of Victoria graduate with five years of hotel management experience, took the plunge in September 2017, joining Vernon's Sparkling Hill Resort as Assistant General Manager.

Sparkling Hill, a luxurious resort known for its crystal décor, sweeping views, and innovative spa treatments, overlooks Okanagan Lake just south of Vernon.

"I love being surrounded by the beauty of the Okanagan on a daily basis and sharing that beauty with the guests who come to enjoy the resort," says Lonsdale.

On a more personal level, Lonsdale also enjoys the local lifestyle.

"Vernon offers opportunities for both my partner (who works in forestry) and myself. We see Vernon as a great community for growing our careers and for enjoying a good lifestyle balance outside of work as well," she says.

Lonsdale brings a wealth of education and experience to her new role. After completing a

Hospitality Management Diploma at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, she graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from the University of Victoria in 2012. Lonsdale also made the most of international student exchange opportunities, spending a semester in Melbourne, Australia and another in Taiwan.

And, because both programs had mandatory co-op programs, Lonsdale also gained front-line experience in hospitality during college and university.

"It was helpful for me during my studies to be able to apply what I was learning," she observes.

Since graduating, Lonsdale has worked in sales, conference and events co-ordination roles at the Westin Bear Mountain Golf Resort and Spa, the Inn at Laurel Point, both in Victoria, and, most recently, as Conference Services Manager at the Pan Pacific Hotel Vancouver.

Would she advise others to follow the same path? "Yes, 100%!" says Lonsdale.

"We are fortunate in this industry because no matter what the local economic situation is, people will always need a place to sleep and a place to eat. The industry is doing a great job of staying current with the latest and greatest in

technology and being on the forefront of the most interesting food and beverage trends. And it's always evolving. One day is never like the last and you are given opportunities to connect with and leave lasting impressions with so many people every day."

Lonsdale offers tips to others hoping to enter the industry:

- > Find open house opportunities for schools that have hospitality and tourism programs;
- > Ask people in the industry whom you know, and even those you don't know, to go for coffee or for an informational interview;
- > Seek out and attend industry nights, networking events, local associations or businesses hosting industry events
- > Many businesses hire interns or summer students. If you are a student, reach out early in your program to places you are interested in. That way, by the time your co-op or work term comes around, you have already established a relationship.

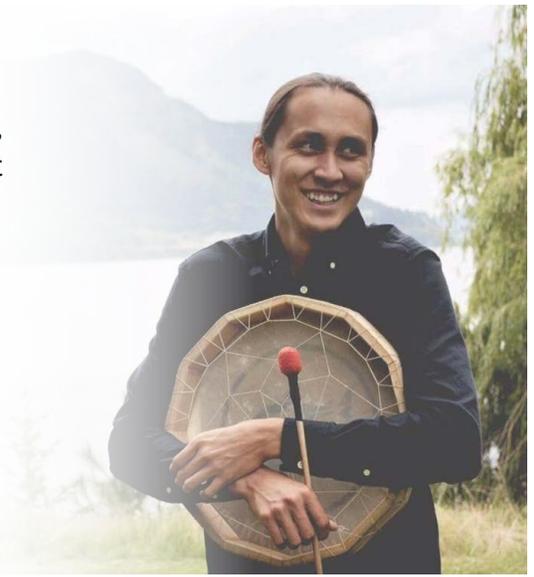
"Tourism is an exciting, thriving industry and with the backyard we have here — wineries, ski resorts, golf courses and so much more — there are many ways to enter the industry. And there aren't a lot of barriers to entry: there's such a need for skilled people that you can choose where you want to be. There's a lot of opportunity if you want it."

<https://www.go2hr.ca/assistant-general-manager>

Career Success Stories

TANNER QUANSTROM

First Nations representative,
Quaaout Lodge & Spa at
Talking Rock Golf Resort



One small step into a canoe led to a big career move for Tanner Quanstrom.

In 2014, Quanstrom was working in the maintenance department at the Quaaout Lodge & Spa in Chase when a colleague asked him to help with a canoe tour. He's never looked back.

The 24-year-old is now the First Nations Representative at the Quaaout Lodge & Spa at Talking Rock Golf Resort. The resort, owned by the Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band, part of the Secwepemc Nation, reflects Secwepemc culture throughout its operations, from the architecture and restaurant menus to a range of guest experiences.

That's where Quanstrom comes in, sharing his own First Nations culture with guests from around the world. His job involves developing and leading interpretive programs as diverse as voyageur canoe rides to visit petroglyphs, walking tours along the Adams River, and storytelling sessions in a traditional shelter near the lodge.

Quanstrom, a member of the Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band, started working at the resort's golf course when he was 17. "I started out raking bunkers and then moved on to cutting greens. I got to be really good at cutting straight lines. Later on I started going to the nursery and learning about

the different types of grass and how to maintain it," he recalls.

His next step was into the lodge's maintenance department: "I worked in every part of the resort because that's what maintenance is for – as a support to the other departments. I learned about the inner workings of the building – it was really interesting," he says.

Meanwhile, the lodge's Cultural Liaison, Frank Antoine, was developing First Nations interpretive programs at the resort. A popular tour was a voyageur canoe ride to see salmon runs in the nearby Adams River.

Recalls Quanstrom: "One day I was helping Frank get the canoe ready and he asked if I could jump on and help with the paddling. At a quiet point on the river he asked if I'd like to do this as a job. 'This would be your office,' he said."

"The job was exactly what I was looking for. I'd always wanted to make a difference in the world and this was my chance: to help revitalize the culture and help keep the Secwepemc language alive."

Quanstrom became a full-time guide in 2016 and, by spring 2017, he was running the department. Throughout that time, he worked to build his

knowledge of the Secwepemc language, history and culture, often with the help of local mentors. “There is some recorded information but for many things you have to go to our elders to find out,” he says.

Developing new programs is another exciting part of his role. “This winter we’re going to show people how to hunt, tan hides and make drums; next year we’re planning to offer traditional spear fishing. I have a lot of freedom to develop programs and my general manager (Jesse Ziercke) is very supportive,” he says.

Ultimately, for Quanstrom, the best part of the job is sharing his culture directly with guests from around the world. “When I take people to see the pictographs I let them know what it means to us and help them to see it through our eyes. My favourite thing is to let people touch the pictograph; that way they really get a sense of going back in time,” he says.

He also enjoys talking to guests, whether that’s addressing a group of 50 or having an in-depth one-on-one conversation. “I don’t have a script; Frank taught me just to speak from the heart,” says Quanstrom.

His advice to others? “If you want to get into tourism, there are so many different fields. If one department isn’t a good fit, you can find another one that suits your personality. Just put your foot in the door and find out what works for you.”

<https://www.go2hr.ca/first-nations-representative>

Career Success Stories

CHANTAL DAIGLE

Service Supervisor, Old Vines
Restaurant at Quails' Gate
Winery

Picture from left to right: Alanna Maxwell (Assistant Restaurant Manager), Chantal Daigle, and Casey Sorochan (Restaurant Manager)



Juggling college classes and a full-time job has its challenges, but Chantal Daigle makes it work.

Daigle is a service supervisor at Old Vines Restaurant – a renowned farm-to-fork upscale dining room at Kelowna's Quails' Gate Family Estate Winery.

"I work with the assistant manager and the restaurant manager in the front of house; I help run the shift, deal with customer or staff issues that arise, and also do some of the training and administration," explains Daigle.

The 23-year-old started as a full time supervisor in May 2017, but she's been with the winery on and off since 2008. Working seasonally throughout high school, she moved from bussing tables and serving customers to becoming the lead server and supervisor in the winery's special events department last year.

Meanwhile, she has also started her third year studies in Business Administration, with a specialty in hospitality and tourism, at Okanagan College in Kelowna.

It can be a balancing act, she admits: "I put in about 15 hours a week on school, while working on top of that more than 40 hours. I try to take as many courses as I can online to save time. I'm also lucky that I work with wonderful people who are flexible and let me work around school."

However, Daigle also finds that her job and studies play well together. "Now that I have a role with more responsibilities, it lines up well with what I'm studying. What I'm learning at school helps with what I do at work, and my job helps put my education into perspective," she observes.

There's also plenty of opportunity for education at work, adds Daigle. "Our senior managers do a good job of providing training resources. For example, the company put me through the WSET (Wine & Spirit Education Trust) sommelier course. I've done level two; I'd love to do level three but I don't have time right now with school work."

In the long term? "I would like to move beyond the restaurant and get more involved in the wine side. It's a fascinating industry and there's so much to learn. I have a good relationship with the owners and senior managers, and I think they're open to helping me progress in my career.

For the moment though, Daigle likes where she's at: "I love my current job. We make wonderful wine on site, the chefs are amazing, and it's fun to share that with guests. Plus we have a really good team and I enjoy that I'm constantly learning – at school and at work."

Would she recommend tourism to others as a career? "Absolutely. It's fun and dynamic, it's one of the biggest industries in Kelowna," she says.

<https://www.go2hr.ca/service-supervisor>

Where can I get more information?

Sign up for the [BC Tourism Careers Newsletter](#) which has up-to-date information about BC's tourism labour market, upcoming job and career fairs, career profiles, the latest jobs, and more.

Have a look at online job sites, including:

- > [go2HR's Thompson Okanagan job board](#)
- > [WorkBC](#), BC's provincial government-run job site
- > [Job Bank](#), operated by the Government of Canada
- > [Hcareers](#), for hotel and hospitality jobs
- > General job search websites: [monster.ca](#), [workopolis.com](#), and [indeed.ca](#)

“You get to spend all day out in the beautiful mountains, meeting people on vacation. They are here to have a good time; you are here to have a good time. Sounds like not a bad day at work to me.” – Scott Strudwick, Cyclist/Guide, Single Track Adventures



Check out the complementary video to this guide:

<https://youtu.be/h0KS-ycjkXI>

THOMPSON OKANAGAN



Viewing platform at Helmcken Falls, Wells Gray Park

DRIVING DISTANCES – km (mi)

Kelowna Int'l Airport to:

Banff	404 (251)	Osoyoos	137 (85)
Calgary	595 (370)	Penticton	77 (48)
Edmonton	883 (549)	Salmon Arm	101 (63)
Jasper	597 (371)	Vancouver	402 (250)
Grand Forks	209 (130)	Seattle	515 (320)
Kamloops	157 (98)	Spokane	411 (255)
Merritt	141 (88)	Valemount	475 (295)

- ### LEGEND
- Trans-Canada Hwy
 - Crowsnest Hwy
 - Yellowhead Hwy
 - Route 97
 - Airport
 - UNESCO site
 - Ski Resort
 - Border Crossing
 - Main Rail Line
 - Regional Areas

