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CASE STUDIES
MANAGEMENT AND
ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum

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INTRODUCTION

After the last group of students left Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum from a full day of programs, curator Alison Klages began wondering how she could expand the consumer demographics and spread awareness about their presence. She strived to introduce new people to Indigenous culture and history but was uncertain about the best strategy for moving forward. How could she get the message out to students? How would she make this attractive to millennials and young adults?

HISTORY

Founded in 1973, the Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum (Ska-Nah-Doht) was an interactive museum that educated visitors about local First Nations histories and Indigenous communities. It focused on informing visitors about the experiences of the Haudenosaunee, the people of the longhouse.

Ska-Nah-Doht Corporate Structure and Funding

As a non-profit organization, Ska-Nah-Doht was funded by revenue generated by the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Area and Chatham Kent municipalities. In recent years, however, it was funded in part by the Federal Museums Assistance Program and Ontario's Museum Operating Grant, as a result of financial hardships from the COVID-19 pandemic. As a non-profit organization, their focus was to sustain itself, while spreading information and educating the greater Southwestern Ontario community about Indigenous peoples.

Alison Klages

As a recipient of both a bachelor's and master's degrees in anthropology, bio-archaeology, and history, Alison Klages was the only full-time employee and curator of Ska-Nah-Doht. Her work experience at competitors, such as Fanshawe Pioneer Village, provided her with the skills she needed to help Ska-Nah-Doht thrive. Although she struggled to find new and inventive ways to expand the business and make it more diversified.

INDUSTRY AND COMPETITORS

Industry

The interactive museum industry in London, and Ontario more broadly, followed common trends. Primarily, it used a reservation-based strategy for tours. Available timeslots were almost always pre-booked by classes of school children or older students. These museums did not charge high prices for admission with the goal of offering accessible education to customers. Often, these businesses would integrate technology into their operations to make it more interactive. Attractions like the Museum of Ontario Archeology and Fanshawe Pioneer Village offered customers both virtual tours and virtual reality tours. In addition, it was adequately funded by government grants during times of economic hardship.

London Area

In the London area, there were three main competitors to Ska-Nah-Doht: The Museum of Ontario Archeology, Fanshawe Pioneer Village, and Museum London. While Ska-Nah-Doht was the only museum in the region with longhouses similar to those the Haudenosaunee lived in about 1,000 years ago, their competition also had defining exhibits. The Museum of Ontario Archeology focused on displaying artifacts from Indigenous populations in the London area and offered virtual reality exhibits showcasing the history of the region. Similarly, Fanshawe Pioneer Village had exciting interactive tours and held special weekend events throughout the year. In both cases, the museums only made reservations for large groups of individuals, typically from school and community groups. Museum London held temporary exhibits in which Indigenous artifacts were on display. Although Ska-Nah-Doht was the only museum in this region of Ontario to have actual longhouses comparable to the originals, these three museums posed the largest competition for Ska-Nah-Doht.

CUSTOMERS

Ska-Nah-Doht's customers were typically educational groups who toured the premises. In the region, customers often ranged from second to eighth grade classes. Many Ontario school boards were encouraging more Indigenous education in their curriculum as a part of truth and reconciliation efforts.[1] Another large consumer segment was Indigenous high school students who went to receive heritage-based programming. These programs focused on the Haudenosaunee and Oneida Nation of the Thames groups. They offered students experiential learning-based classes, including lessons on pottery sculpting, tool making, and games, for example. A new objective of Ska-Nah-Doht was to attract multi-generation families to pass on their teachings of Indigenous ways of being and learning to younger generations.

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[1] Heather Rivers, "Thames Valley trustees approve mandatory course on Indigenous authors," *London Free Press*, May 24, 2023, https://lfpress.com/news/local-news/thames-valley-trustees-approve-mandatory-course-on-indigenous-authors-2.

PRODUCT AND PRICING

Ska-Nah-Doht offered experiential learning opportunities and tours for its customers. Educational and community groups were charged for a minimum of 15 people (Exhibit 1).[2] From this set rate per group, Ska-Nah-Doht received at least $120 for each program and $210 for two. A full-time staff member could conduct a maximum of two programs per day between Monday and Friday. Ska-Nah-Doht also charged $5 for parking, and on average, half of individual customers paid parking fees with credit cards, which cost Ska-Nah-Doht 2.5% per transaction.[3] Ska-Nah-Doht offered some of their experiential learning classes for free, whereas other organizations had various fees such as equipment rental charge of $10 per person for snowshoeing in the winter.

Questions About Pricing

Despite Ska-Nah-Doht offering affordable pricing, Klages maintained that charging attendance fees was a potential barrier and kept people from learning about Indigenous culture. She therefore explored the idea of creating rebates for Indigenous students and community groups.

As Klages considered the idea of offering Forest Bathing Walks and Twilight Tuesday tours, she recognized that this would require more staff.[4] As the only full-time employee at Ska-Nah-Doht, Klages was already busy with educational groups and programming. As a non-for-profit organization, hiring staff posed challenges, as they were limited to offering volunteer positions. Klages wondered who within the local community would be interested in such positions at Ska-Nah-Doht. She considered outreach to high school students who were already involved with the educational programming who needed volunteer hours to graduate, yet it was difficult to find committed volunteers who were regularly available.[5] Klages planned to charge similar amounts per person for the programming and deliberated if the sales earned from the events would be enough to cover the wages of a part-time employee. They would be paid $15.50 per hour and Ska-Nah-Doht would have to pay an additional 17% in mandatory employer expenses. The new staff would work for three-hour shifts.

PROMOTION

Word of Mouth and Print Promotion

Ska-Nah-Doht was promoted in the London Area by word of mouth within the teaching community. There was a group of teachers who consistently visited each year, and retirees often recommended Ska-Nah-Doht to new teachers. Additionally, Ska-Nah-Doht used signs for promotions, including placing one along a major county highway. Klages had never invested in other print media sources, but she considered this option for this year's marketing expenditure.

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[2] Ska-Nah-Doht required a minimum group size of 15 people. Smaller groups would be charged at the per person rate for 15 people even if they were only a group of 10, for example.

[3] Parking represented 25% of Ska-Nah-Doht's revenue over the past three years from 2020 – 2023.

[4] Forest Bathing was designed to support physical and mental health and wellbeing by spending time in a forest to heal or maintain mental health. Twilight Tuesdays were tours that were aimed at younger families, typically people aged 20 – 45, who were interested in engaging with nature for a leisurely evening. These programs were part of Klage's goal of disseminating Indigenous knowledge through specialized programming at Ska-Nah-Doht.

[5] The Ontario government required 40 hours of mandatory volunteer work to graduate from secondary school.

Online Presence and Social Media Promotion

Ska-Nah-Doht primarily used Instagram and Meta to market itself. Klages also took advantage of the Lower Thames Valley Conservation social media channels and targeted ads from Google. One of Klages' priorities was to continue using target ads, however, she wanted to improve traffic on her Instagram and Meta accounts. Klages aimed to start programming for the demographic of people aged 20-45. She also planned to start offering Forest Bathing Walks and Twilight Tuesdays and use social media platforms to promote them. Klages thought that Instagram, Meta, and TikTok were the best options for their cross-compatibility and target advertisement software.

Ska-Nah-Doht had an annual marketing budget of $1,100 for online ads and $1,200 for all print media. Klages was not sure how to best allocate it across all of the available platforms, though she sought to gain the highest conversion of impressions or clicks on them as possible. See Exhibit 2 for a breakdown of advertising selections.

PLACEMENT

Online Presence and Social Media Promotion

In addition to offering in-person educational experiences, Klages wondered if utilizing more technological platforms could increase revenue. With the intention to spread awareness of Ska-Nah-Doht, Klages thought that leveraging online resources could grant people more access to information about Indigenous culture. Ska-Nah-Doht did not have virtual courses about the Haudenosaunee peoples, nor did it sell their gift shop items online. Offering programming and products online could allow a wider range of people to learn about Indigenous culture, yet Klages was unsure about how to set it. Already occupied with other priorities, Klages would need help creating video lessons and managing the online store. She was also concerned about how the interactive experiential learning programming would translate into video, and if this medium would dimmish the lessons.

DECISION

To resolve these problems, Alison Klages focused on two major problems: Determining how to promote and popularize Ska-Nah-Doht to spread awareness about Indigenous history and attract new consumer groups, while keeping costs low; and determining how to find and design new products and services to attract a broader audience in fulfilling their mission for education.

EXHIBIT #1

PRODUCT COSTING INFORMATION

	Price Per Person	
Education Service	**1 Program**	**2 Programs**
School Group Education Trip	$8	$14
Other Non-profit or Family Groups	$8	$16
Products	**Price**	**Variable Cost**
Museum Average Small Item Selling Price	$5.75	$3.14
Museum Average Large Item Selling Price	$20	$8.89

Sales Proportion	
Education Services	90%
Products	10%

EXHIBIT #2

ADVERTISING DATA[6]

Platform	CPC (Cost per Click)	CPM (Cost per 1,000 Impressions)	Conversion Rate
Instagram	$0.60	$15.00	2.4%
Meta	$1.06	$7.19	13.6%
TikTok	$0.75	$10.00	3.4%

Media	Cost per Unit
Posters	$0.13
Business Cards	$0.19
Brochures	$0.72

[6] Data compiled from Akvile DeFazio, "How Much Do Instagram Ads Cost in 2022? (+ How to Make the most of Your Budget)," *WordStream*, May 31, 2023, https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2021/02/08/instagram-ads-cost; Larry Kim, "What is a good conversion rate? It's Higher Than You Think," *WordStream*, February 27, 2023, https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2014/03/17/what-is-a-good-conversion-rate; Mark Irvine, "Facebook Ad Benchmarks for YOUR Industry [Data], *WordStream*, May 31, 2023, https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/02/28/facebook-advertising-benchmarks; "How Much Does Facebook Advertising Cost in 2023?," *WebF*, accessed June , 2023, https://www.webfx.com/social-media/pricing/how-much-does-facebook-advertising-cost/#:~:text=Facebook%20advertising%20costs%2C%20on%20average,and%20%2412.07%20per%201000%20impressions; newcbc, "Understanding TikTok Ads: The Key to Effective Reporting and Budgeting," *Corkboard Concepts*, February 1, 2023, https://corkboardconcepts.com/marketing-resources/blog/tiktok-ads/#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Average%20Cost,based%20on%20many%20different%20factors; Admin, "TikTok Ads Benchmarks for CTR, CR and CP – 2023 update, *Lebesgue*, May 26. 2023, https://lebesgue.io/tiktok-ads/tiktok-ads-benchmarks-for-ctr-cr-and-cpm-2023-update/; "Posters," *VistaPrint*, https://www.vistaprint.com/signs-posters/posters; "High-quality business cards at affordable prices," *VistaPrint*, https://www.vistaprint.ca/mlp/everyday-savings-business-cards; "Custom brochures," *VistaPrint*, https://www.vistaprint.ca/marketing-materials/brochures.