

Skwàchys Lodge – Aboriginal Hotel and Gallery

Skwàchys Lodge is a leading worldwide example of utilizing art as social enterprise. The Lodge, located in downtown Vancouver near historic Gastown, is truly a one of a kind endeavor. The brainchild of David Eddy, CEO of Vancouver Native Housing as well as a board member of Canadian Housing and Renewal, an organization which oversees eighteen buildings in Vancouver that provide lodging for indigenous people on both a permanent and temporary basis. David Eddy brought his extensive experience and a vision to a formerly decrepit building in an area ripe for revitalization. His prime directive to build residential units combined with his love of art resulted in a hotel and residential housing development existing in harmony that is both a benefit to tourists and the resident artists alike. In a lucky moment of serendipity, architect John Zwicker Casino, famed resort architect joined the project and a masterpiece was created.

The Lodge features eighteen one-of-a-kind guest suites, each of which is a unique art installation. Stunning visual stories about First Nations culture come alive through the collaborative work of world renowned interior designers and Aboriginal artists in a building owned and operated by Vancouver Native Housing Society. The lower floors provide a monthly subsidy for twenty-four aboriginal artists' live-work studios, and the basement includes a state of the art work room fully equipped for artists working in various media who can create, at will, round the clock. David, in his genius and resourcefulness, developed the lodge into a completely self-sustaining business with no government funding, utilizing best practices in the renovation – all wood used to build tables, bedframes and other design features was reclaimed from the original building was reclaimed. The gift store stands out as one of the most sophisticated venues for native art in the province. The hotel staff is well versed about the artists, their art and the rotating exhibits. Even parking in the lower decks lends itself to profitability. The fully equipped kitchen is rented to a native chef, Theresa Contois, who caters events from the facility as well and provides special dinners for guests. In addition, the dining room may be rented for special occasions.

The latest booking methodologies are used by a native staff who are well-educated in digital media, and keeping with the current trends, social media and messaging is also

extensively used. The suites, while small, are so beautifully designed and amenity-filled that they have one of the highest occupancy rates in Vancouver, which translates directly to the bottom line. Paper products are made of recyclable materials and, to the best of their ability, products used in the lodge are locally sourced. Food is farm to table and the farmer's market is around the corner. Wine is produced by the Nk'Mip Cellars in Okanagan Valley, which is one of several hospitality enterprises of the Osoyoos native band that also own the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa and share the genius architecture of John Zwickel Casino. Linens throughout are made from all natural fibers, and the decor of each of the six artists - who each designed three rooms - is carefully maintained. The totem pole that crowns the building and the spirit art below it have become iconic beacons of native culture in the two short years of operations.