

**AN OPERATIONAL MANUAL FOR  
THE TOURIST ATTRACTION CENTRE**

**Ignace, Ontario  
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## INTRODUCTION

The information contained throughout this manual will assist you by performing a variety of responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner. Once you have mastered these particular skills, you will be able to provide **quality service** for visitors in our area. The information provided within this manual highlights a variety of concepts from the N.O.T.I.C.E. manual supplemented by the Ministry of Travel and Tourism. This manual will provide information on customer service and travel centre operations.

Read this manual carefully, review it often, and most of all be professional. Please remember that your actions can have a positive impact for our community's tourist facilities and attractions. The extra dollars that visitors spend, following your suggestions, will provide extra dollars in the pockets of every Ontario resident.

## THE ROLE OF THE TOURIST COUNSELLOR

The role of the tourist counsellor is to provide information for persons who are travelling throughout Ontario.

The role of these counsellors include several of the following responsibilities.

- \* welcoming visitors to the local area and province
- \* answering tourist questions and distributing travel literature
- \* promoting attractions, facilities, and services in the Ignace area
- \* providing friendly, professional service to **all** visitors
- \* ensuring that the travel centre creates good first impressions by being attractive, organized, maintained.
- \* collecting visitor statistics which will contribute to ongoing research in tourism.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

As a tourist counsellor, you represent the <sup>ATIKOKAN</sup> Ignace community, as well as the surrounding travel area and the province. Therefore, it is important that you provide the best possible impression and service to all visitors.

### First Impressions

When visitors enter this centre, they will be creating their own first impressions by what they observe around them. First Impressions are important because they are formed within minutes, and yet take a lifetime to change, if ever.

Therefore, this impression that you give to tourists will apply not only to yourself, but also to your community, local area, and even province. By providing an excellent impression, we can be assured that visitors will have a more enjoyable stay and will want to come back again.

**Three Key Steps**

To assist you in creating a good impression, the following key steps have been developed:

1. The travel centre shall be warm, welcoming, neat, clean, organized, and well maintained.
2. The publications shall be well displayed, neat, organized, available, and accessible.
3. The travel counsellor shall be friendly, welcoming, neat, well dressed, and professional at all times.

**Dress Code**

Looking like a professional is extremely important for creating that good first impression. It also helps to identify yourself as the counsellor at the centre. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

1. Name tags must be worn to help tourists identify you as a counsellor.
2. The following attire is acceptable: shirt, blouse, or polo shirt with slacks, skirt, dress shorts; socks or panty hose and shoes in good condition; jacket or sweater in cool weather. Respectable t-shirts.
3. The following items of dress are considered to be unprofessional and inappropriate: blue jeans, sweat pants, gym shorts, halter tops, bathing suits, barefeet, and baseball caps.
4. Personal hygiene is very important.( hair, teeth, eyes, mouth, hands)

## **CONDUCT**

Your conduct on the job is essential and equally important as proper dress when creating a good impression.

The tourist attraction centre is a place of business and your conduct should reflect this standard of professionalism. Thus, the following guidelines should be adhered to:

1. Be friendly and welcoming to all your visitors.
2. Never be rude to a visitor who has been rude to you; maintain the professional attitude.
3. Be patient and understanding since not all visitors are expert travellers.
4. Avoid eating, drinking, or smoking in the counselling area of this centre or in the view of tourists.
5. Do not chew gum while counselling.
6. Keep your personal belongings out of sight of tourists.
7. Keep radios and tape players at low volumes. Turn them off when visitors arrive.
8. Restock shelves when it is not busy.
9. A travel counsellor should be familiar with all publications displayed.
10. Keep smiling, even with the most difficult visitors.

## **FIVE STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL TRAVEL COUNSELLING**

Once you have created that good first impression you then need to follow up with good service. The Five Steps to Successful Travel Counselling is a step by step procedure for dealing efficiently and effectively with visitors at this centre. Following these five steps will ensure that you give your visitors the first class service that they deserve. The following five steps are:

- \* **Acknowledge**
- \* **Listen**
- \* **Provide**
- \* **Sell**
- \* **Close**

### **Acknowledge:**

When a visitor enters the travel centre, it is important that you acknowledge them immediately or as soon as possible. Introduce yourself with a smile and eye contact, and then offer your assistance. Keep in mind that you must look alive and appear interested in the public when you approach your visitors. This helps give the tourists an idea that you are interested in their needs.

### **Listen:**

Once you have offered your help, a tourist may reply with a simple question or may start explaining exactly what they are looking for. Regardless of the situation, be sure to listen actively and carefully with full attention. Confirm and clarify any questions that they have imposed on you.

Your answer should be clear and concise. Do not recommend any one facility or establishment over another. Instead, give options to the visitors by showing them how to use the publications.

**Provide:**

Confirm their request and repeat it back to them to make sure that you interpreted the question correctly.

**Sell:**

Once you have provided the visitors with the necessary answers or publications, ask other questions to find out more about your visitor's interests. You may suggest options that might include a stop at the local gift shop, restaurant, or any other attraction/service in our area. Be creative.

**Close:**

The conclusion of your conversation with your tourist should be as friendly and courteous as your opening acknowledgement. Remember to smile, keep constant eye contact and offer a friendly farewell.

Using these five steps will ensure that your visitor receives the best possible service.



## CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

Challenging situations are bound to arise when you deal with people. Presented below are some tips for dealing with them.

**Elderly Visitors:** You must recognize that some elderly visitors may require special treatment. The following guidelines may apply:

- \* recognize hearing impairments or the possibility of one.
- \* be sensitive to problems and worries. (money, cost concerns, physical conditions)
- \* speak clearly in a normal tone of voice.
- \* repeat and rephrase your answers when necessary.
- \* give clear, simple directions: if these directions are complexed, then write them down.
- \* mark travel routes clearly.
- \* ask about any special travel needs.
- \* be patient if the conversation moves slowly.

**Hearing Impaired:** Hearing impaired or deaf visitors may be hard to notice. They may identify themselves as being hearing impaired or deaf or you may notice a hearing aid or unusual speech pattern. The following tips may help you deal with this particular situation.

- \* face the visitor and maintain eye contact.
- \* speak clearly and slowly; do not shout.
- \* do not cover your mouth or turn away when speaking.
- \* enunciate properly so that they may easily read your lips.
- \* write notes if necessary or if asked to do so.
- \* use gestures where possible to clarify your words.
- \* use pictures, maps, or other publications to enhance communications.
- \* be patient.

**Foreign Speaking Visitors:** Visitors who cannot speak or understand English can be a challenge. The following tips may be useful.

- \* speak clearly (slowly)
- \* use gestures to help clarify your speech.
- \* try to determine the amount of English the visitor can understand by asking questions.
- \* use maps, pictures, and illustrations to assist in communicating.
- \* contact someone in community who speaks the visitors language.(listing in Appendix)
- \* use simple words and phrases.
- \* refer to other sources of information.

**Seeing Impaired/Blind Visitors:** Seeing impaired or blind people like to travel too so do not be surprised to see them at the travel centre. They may be a part of a bus excursion or travelling with friends or relatives.

Here are some helpful hints:

- \* speak clearly in a normal tone of voice.
- \* ask them if they require special assistance.
- \* ask them if publications would be useful.
- \* be specific when giving directions.
- \* if they require your guidance, let them take your arm and walk slightly behind you.
- \* inform the person when you are leaving them, even if its just for moment.
- \* be friendly and open with them as you would any other visitor.

**Other Physically Challenged Visitors:** These individuals include those in wheelchairs, on crutches, or with walking difficulties. The following tips may be useful in dealing with these challenges:

- \* if you recognize a physical handicap person, offer your help if it is needed.
- \* do not touch guide, or provide assistance without permission.
- \* ask about any special requirements that may have to be considered.
- \* be up front about the handicap; do not pretend it is nonexistent.
- \* if you are talking to a person in a wheelchair for any length of time, seat yourself if possible.

**Angry Visitors:** Sometimes, a visitor may enter your centre in an angry frame of mind. The following tips may help you deal with these particular individuals:

- \* let the visitor vent their anger.
- \* do not take it personally or argue back.
- \* empathize with them; let them know you understand their problem.
- \* give them your full attention and listen carefully.
- \* do what you can to solve their problem; offer solutions or options.
- \* outline complaint procedures if necessary.
- \* remain calm and be patient.
- \* speak clearly and evenly to avoid any additional confusion.

These situations are typical and you may be faced with them at some point throughout the tourist season.

Other situations such as arguing visitors, interrupting visitors, time monopolizers, hurried visitors, and troublemakers/drunk/belligerent visitors may also be presented to you. However, common sense and (professional service) should help you deal with these situations in an effective efficient manner.

**Complaints:** On occasion, you may receive or hear of a complaint about a facility, attraction, or service, from one of your visitors. The procedures outlined below should be followed closely.

1. Listen carefully with your full attention.
2. If it appears to be a relatively serious complaint make note of it in your log book or daily report.
3. Tell them you are "sorry" that they had a bad experience but remain impartial about the facility or service involved.
4. If they are angry, do not take it personally.
5. If they wish to put the complaint in writing and want to forward it to the respective organization, you can use the guidelines below in order to obtain their address.
6. Verbal complaints cannot be forwarded by yourself because they will not be acted upon.
7. They may want you to forward their complaint. Check with your supervisor about this matter.

### TELEPHONE ENQUIRIES

Speaking with a tourist on the phone is just as important as dealing with them in person at our travel centre. You can apply the **Five Steps to Successful Travel Counselling** to tourists on the phone. Of course not all telephone conversations will run so smoothly. Do your best to follow the guidelines and tips for those challenging situations as listed previously in this section.

## GENERAL TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE

### When you answer a call...

- \* Answer within three rings.
- \* Identify yourself and your location immediately (eg., **Good Morning ~~Ignace~~ Tourist Attraction Centre, Big Bird speaking, Can I help you?**). This practice will let the caller know if they have reached the right number, and also is speaking to the right person. It also creates a good business-like impression.
- \* Be pleasant, personable, and enthusiastic, as you would be in person.
- \* Do not continue your conversation with a visitor in the centre while your telephone is ringing. Excuse yourself to answer it. Explain to the caller that you are busy with a tourist at the moment and if they would like to be put on hold or call back.

### When you must put someone on hold...

- \* Ask them if they mind being put on hold.
- \* Give the caller progress reports if you put them on hold for more than a minute.
- \* Offer to call back if you cannot provide the information that they have requested.
- \* If you make an offer to call them back, tell them when to expect your call.

### When listening to your caller...

- \* take notes while you listen.
- \* confirm and clarify what the caller wants before you answer them.
- \* do not continue with other activities while you listen.
- \* ask questions when necessary; ask the caller to repeat anything you did not catch; do not make assumptions.

### When you provide information over the phone...

- \* suggest the caller get a pen and paper to record the information you have for them.
- \* read off the information clearly and slowly, allowing them time to write.
- \* always give several options about places to stay, eat, go, etc.

### When you make or take personal calls...

- \* always keep them short.
- \* end the conversation and hang up if a visitor enters the travel centre.

### **Telephone Regulations**

It is very important to be familiar with the rules and regulations on personal, long distance, or collect calls that we have established for the Tourist Attraction Centre.

- \* long distance calls to obtain information for a visitor are acceptable.
- \* long distance calls for personal use are prohibited.
- \* you can accept collect calls from tourists.

### **Tourist Attraction Operations**

A travel centre that operates with clearly defined policies and regulations will run smoothly. Review this section of the Operating Manual and clarify details with your supervisor or employer. Details on our centre's operation hours, and opening/closing procedures appear first in this section. Following this section, information about brochure displays, publication inventory, and visitor statistics are outlined.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

The hours of operation for the T.A.C. will reflect that of the recommended hours for a regional travel centre:

**October to May:**

Monday - Friday          8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**June - September:**

Monday - Sunday          8:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

## **OPENING THE TOURIST ATTRACTION CENTRE**

There are a number of tasks which must be completed when you are first to arrive at the centre:

- \* unlock entrance doors for both the public washrooms and T.A.C. building.
- \* turn on all lights for building, displays, and exhibits.
- \* restock pamphlet racks.
- \* display the "OPEN" sign.

### **Daily Requirements:**

\* check the washrooms frequently throughout the day and more frequently if you work at a busy centre.  
Check for :

- adequate toilet paper and hand towels
- clogged sinks/urinals
- overflowing garbage containers
- wet floors
- unflushed toilets
- burned out light bulbs

**\*\* any major problems should be reported to your supervisor or other designated person\*\***

- \* keep centre litter free both inside and out.
- \* keep displays, exhibits, maps, pictures, and publication racks in good condition.
- \* report major maintenance requirements to your supervisor or other designated persons. These might include broken windows, long grass, electrical problems, etc.
- \* keep your counter tops wiped clean at all times.
- \* sweep exterior walkways if appropriate.
- \* weed flower beds as necessary.
- \* keep the centre at a comfortable temperature.
- \* make sure the flags are in good repair.

### **CLOSING THE TRAVEL CENTRE**

The number of the following tasks must be completed upon closing the T.A.C.

- \* lock all the entrance doors for the public bathrooms and T.A.C. building.
- \* shut-off all lights, except for those which are on a timer (they will shut-off automatically.)
- \* clean the staff room (dishes, coffee pot, cups, table, etc.)
- \* complete log book and tourist statistics for that particular day.
- \* empty garbage cans throughout the centre.
- \* display the "**CLOSED**" sign.



## TRAVEL PUBLICATIONS

Your supervisor will have obtained the appropriate supply of literature for the travel centre. This supply of information should last through the entire tourism centre. However, during this season, some publications may run out. Therefore, you can try to obtain these brochures by contacting the respective tourist operators.

### Travel Publication Display

The travel publications at our centre are your tools for answering tourists' questions and selling the area. The consultants for the publication displays have specific guidelines that must be followed; these guidelines can be obtained from the Economic Development Office. In general, the following suggestions are geared towards their overall appearance.

1. Keep your display neat and organized as specified by the consultants guidelines. Duplicate publications if necessary to maintain a "full look", do not let it appear that our area has little to offer. **REORDER** publications before you run out.
2. The remaining copies of the Traveller's Encyclopedia, Accommodations, and Camping Booklets should be stored under the counter. Do the same for the other publications which are popular or in short supply. This procedure will help you to maintain control of their distribution.
3. Do not display outdated Government publications. These publication are updated and reprinted every year. Only the most updated copies should be displayed. Outdated publications are a potential source of complaints as facilities and attractions are constantly changing rates, adding/deleting services, etc.
4. Every time you get new publications in, one copy of each should be put in the spare copy drawer. This helps you to avoid visitors getting upset when you have run out of something they need.

### **Distribution of Publications**

Handing out travel publications is an important part of your job. The publications that are taken by tourists will remind them of your suggestions and will provide them with the opportunity to discover more about Ontario. When you hand out a publication be sure that the visitor understands what is in the publication and how it is used. A publication that appears to complicated and confusing can end up in the garbage at the tourist's next stop. Hand out only those publications that will be of value to the visitor. Do not overload them with information.

A general rule of thumb for quantity of publications is "one copy per party" (party means a family, groups, or friends travelling together). If a visitor specifically requests for more copies and you can spare them, then do so. If you are in extreme short supply of the publications explain this to the visitor and suggest they stop at another centre for additional copies.

### **Road Map Distribution**

When asked for a road map or for directions offer to mark the tourist's route on the map. Keep in mind the following points:

- \* unfold the map facing the tourist; only unfold the required section to show the route requested.
- \* circle the tourist's present location and destination on the map.
- \* trace the most appropriate route between the two points.
- \* indicate the approximate distance of the route.
- \* indicate landmarks which may help to distinguish the route.
- \* point out attraction en route.
- \* fold the road map in such a way that the tourist can see the route that you have traced.

**Visitor Statistics**

As a travel counsellor, one of your daily responsibilities will be recording the number of parties that visit the centre each day. These tabulations will be done by tallying entries on the visitor's registry. This registry method utilizes a form which visitors are encouraged to sign. This method gathers detailed information on visiting tourists such as their home town, destination, reason for travel, etc. This information is then forwarded to Ontario Sunset Country because it is valuable for both its marketing and advertising.

Another thing to know about is the Visitor Registration form. The use of this form has already been implemented in several of the twelve regional travel areas. This form should be self explanatory for visitors but you will have to encourage them to sign it. At some point in your conversation with them be sure to ask them to sign it. Keep the form displayed on the counter as this area is a prominent area of our centre. As this registry sheet is filled replace it. Always start a new one each morning.

## **SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Never answer a visitors's question with "I don't know" or "I can't help you". Do the best you can to answer that visitors question by contacting outside information sources such as the Ministry of Natural Resources, or the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, or a community group or service. If you cannot find the answer the very least you can do is offer the visitor is an alternate source that the visitor can try. The Travel Counsellor's Directory contains a list of addresses and telephone numbers for sources of further information on a wide variety of subjects. This may be of help to you.