



THE HISTORY OF TOFINO

The Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations people have lived on the west coast of Vancouver Island for an estimated 10,000 years. Their traditional society lived in harmony with the rich resources of the coastal temperate rainforest for millennia. It is estimated that 100,000 people lived on the west coast of Vancouver Island before European explorers spread diseases such as small pox to the villages. Many communities lost more than 80 percent of their population during the 1800's.

Captain Cook was the first European to explore the area in 1778. The first outpost build by the British was Fort Defiance, in 1791, on Meares Island. However, it was for the famed Spanish hydrographer, Don Vincent Tofino, that Tofino was given its name in 1792.

Much of the rich First Nations history was lost due to the devastating population decline, but the artistry, stories, songs and culture live on today, in a culture as enduring as the waves that crash on her kilometres of coastline.

In 1875 a trading post was built on Stubbs Island with the arrival, by boat, of some of the first European settlers.

In the early 1900s, there were still only a handful of non-native settlers living in the area, considered then as one of the most remote parts of Canada. The first doctor arrived in 1906 and in 1913, a church was built in Tofino, soon followed by a post office, logging camps and stores. Access to the remote outpost was by ship on the Princess Maquinna Ferry.

It was not until the onset of World War II and the treat of a Pacific invasion, that a military airport and hospital were built in 1937.

The first logging road opened to the coast in 1959, but remained a long hard drive over uneven, unpaved roads until 1971, when the National Parks opened Pacific Rim National Park and the road was paved all the way to Tofino.

Road access began Tofino's transformation from a remote fishing and logging village in the spectacular Clayoquot Sound to the world-class tourism destination.

Today, visitors are able to reach the majestic wild west coast by car, bus, plane or boat.

In 2004, Michelin Road Atlas rated the drive from Victoria to Tofino as one of the top three drives in Canada.

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