



The Canadian Academy of
Travel & Tourism:

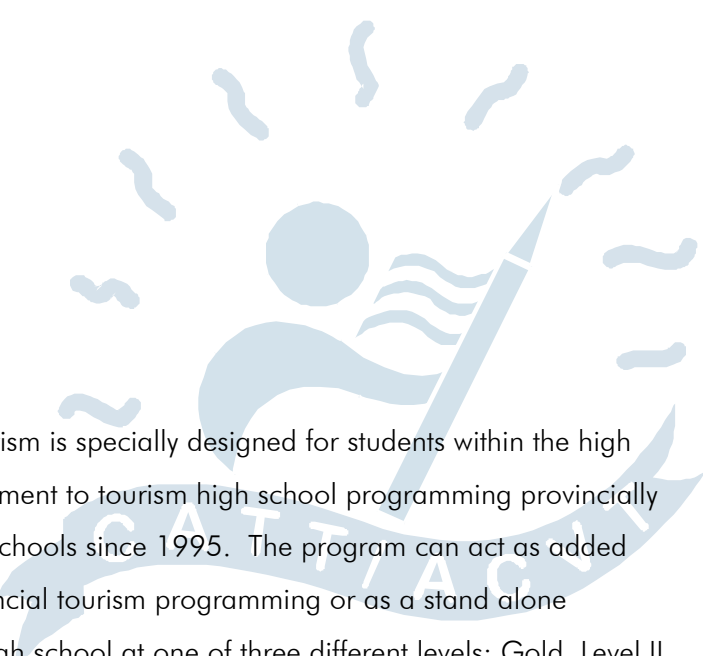
a focus on

**Prince George
Secondary School**

Prince George, British Columbia



CATT Background



The Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism is specially designed for students within the high school system as an introduction and/or enrichment to tourism high school programming provincially and territorially. It has operated in Canadian schools since 1995. The program can act as added value or enrichment to existing local and provincial tourism programming or as a stand alone course/credit. CATT can be introduced in a high school at one of three different levels: Gold, Level II and Level I.

CATT aims to promote the national importance of tourism among young people, to highlight the career opportunities in tourism and to develop skills through national standardized learning outcomes associated with curriculum learning activity sets for educators to use academically and experientially in their high schools.

Its mission is to introduce and promote careers in the tourism industry while students pursue their high school studies. Students enrolled in the program follow regular high school curriculum with a “specialization” in tourism. Academy students demonstrate learning outcomes referenced to the National Occupational Standards for Transferable Skills established by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, the Employability Skills 2000+ assembled by the Conference Board of Canada and Human Resource and Social Development Essential Skills.

Canadian Academy of Travel & Tourism: A Case Study

The following is an in-depth look at the Academy Gold-level program independently run within a secondary school setting. With a commitment to tourism studies and exploring careers in the industry, each Academy program is a unique operation, flavoured by the culture and the spirit of the surrounding community.

The School and the Community

Prince George, located in the heart of British Columbia, is a year-round tourism destination full of outdoor adventures, cultural experiences, and historical gems. It offers countless opportunities for high school students to get involved in the local tourism sector or to gain experience for adventure further afield. Whether they are interested in accommodation, food and beverage services, event management, heritage interpretation, or outdoor guiding, Prince George and its surrounding area can provide students with inspiration, knowledge, and hands-on tourism experience.

This wealth of resources has assisted Prince George Secondary School (PGSS) in gaining over a decade's experience in providing top-class tourism education. The school prides itself on offering its students relevant, hands-on learning to pique their interest and build the transferable skills they need to succeed after graduation. To this end, PGSS began offering Tourism 11 in 1997; its success and popularity lead the school to add Tourism 12 and join the Canadian Academy of Travel and Tourism (CATT) Gold program in 1999.

CATT Gold School Program at Prince George Secondary School

The national CATT program allows students to pursue their high school diploma while focusing on academic and career skills related to tourism. Participants gain a head start in post-secondary studies and are prepared to take advantage of the vast number of tourism employment and business possibilities the sector offers in Canada and internationally. The Academy also forges links between its schools and local tourism businesses, building strong connections between industry and a new generation of skilled and experienced employees.

CATT is coordinated on a national level by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC), which assists schools by supplying curricula, training programs, and opportunities for networking with other educators and tourism employers. There are three levels at which a school can participate: the introductory Level I, the knowledge-building Level II, and the skill-building Gold Level. These three levels provide increasing degrees of classroom learning and hands-on experience, with the three-year Gold program offering high school students a solid foundation of skills and knowledge essential for a career in tourism.

Students who wish to achieve their Gold certificate must complete a number of requirements to ensure they are adequately prepared for either post-secondary education or the world of work. They must obtain their high school diploma, attend a tourism career workshop, complete a customer service oriented program, accumulate 240 hours of workplace experience, and participate in an exit interview. They also create a portfolio, which

documents their achievements and experiences related to tourism. It acts as an excellent supplement to a résumé, or to a college or university application.

Prince George Secondary Staff Involvement

Teacher Suzanne Sharp started the CATT Gold program at PGSS, with the encouragement of four other British Columbia CATT schools. The PGSS program is based on Tourism 11 and Tourism 12 curricula and the current demands of the tourism sector. The overarching emphasis is on introducing students to tourism and providing them with knowledge about its many opportunities. Transferable skills are a very important component of the program, so educators encourage students to complete such certification courses as the customer service oriented WorldHost Fundamentals (formerly SuperHost), responsible alcohol service course *Serving it Right*, and safe and sanitary foodservice course *FoodSafe Level I*.

As Ms. Sharp developed the program, she took advantage of various networking opportunities in British Columbia, becoming actively involved with the Secondary Tourism Educator's Group and attending annual tourism instructor conferences. She also attended the national CATT conference on several occasions, building a wide network of fellow tourism educators and learning about national and global opportunities for students.

CATT Curriculum at Prince George Secondary

To ensure students learn about post-secondary and career opportunities in the sector, PGSS has hosted a range of speakers chosen from local tourism stakeholders. Local businesses and post-secondary institutions have been very supportive of the program, and requests for guest speakers and field trip arrangements are always met very easily. Speakers have included representatives from Tourism Prince George, the Tourism Career Awareness Program, the College of New Caledonia's Hospitality Administration program and its Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism program, and the University of Northern British Columbia's Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management program. These associations and institutions have shared advice on getting into the sector and discussed the importance of the skills students are building through the Academy. Echoing this, a speaker from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, which provides services and support to those living with vision loss, discussed the key skills gained through the WorldHost Customers with Disabilities training program, taken by Tourism 12 students and available as an option for one of the training program requirements of the Gold certificate.

Students have also toured many establishments to get an up-close view of the ins and outs of running a tourism operation. Visits to the Coast Inn of the North and the Ramada Hotel have taught them about the accommodations industry, related careers, and *emerit* training programs. They have explored the usefulness of a Local Tour Guide course through tours of Exploration Place and the Two Rivers Art Gallery. Dining establishments like Earl's and Moxie's have been the ideal locations to look at the practical applications of *FoodSafe* and *Serving it Right* courses, while Shogun Japanese Steakhouse has showcased the relevance of the WorldHost Japanese Service Expectations course.

To explore tourism in a wider context, program participants have gone on field trips to destinations further from home. Some have been on excursions to renowned Mount Robson Provincial Park, where they hiked the Berg Lake Trail to Kinney Lake and were instructed by a BC Park Ranger on the subjects of park operations and sustainable tourism. Students have also been white water rafting with Mount Robson White Water, where they

learned about the adventure industry and how safety is ensured in such operations. In other years, CATT students have travelled to Vancouver and Victoria to explore various facets of these cosmopolitan destinations. Students have been on tours of BC Ferries, the Vancouver Airport, the Air Canada hangar, the Fairmont Empress, the Camosun College Hospitality program, the University of Victoria Hospitality Management program, the Royal BC Museum, British Columbia's Parliament Buildings, and the Canadian Tourism College. They have explored Victoria's inner harbour by sea kayak, traversed the Capilano Suspension Bridge, and enjoyed great views of Vancouver from the Harbour Tower.

National and Global Learning Opportunities

PGSS has participated in a Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) exchange with students from Cobourg, Ontario, and in the annual Global Travel and Tourism Partnership (GTTP) case study competition.

The SEVEC exchange involved 25 students from each of PGSS and St. Mary's Secondary School of Cobourg, Ontario. The swap gave students and teachers the chance to see how tourism operates in a very different region of the country. The group took in the Winterlude festival in Ottawa, went to see the musical *Mamma Mia* in Toronto, visited the heights of the CN Tower, and explored several other Ontario venues. When Cobourg students travelled to the west coast, they met up with fellow CATT school New Westminster Secondary School and toured the Vancouver area. Following this, the PGSS and St. Mary's students were reunited in Prince George for the second half of the student exchange. Together the two schools crossed into Alberta to view the breathtaking wilderness of Jasper National Park, take part in a snow coach tour at the Columbia Icefield, and examine the sheer size of the West Edmonton Mall and the many attractions and activities offered there. The experience wrapped up with a hike and a wiener roast at Forests for the World in Prince George.

Participating in the GTTP Case Study competition gave students the opportunity to closely examine sustainable tourism. Their study profiled Mount Robson Provincial Park, one of BC's largest and oldest parks, and its efforts to balance conservation and recreation. Students were graciously assisted by the faculties of the University of Northern BC's Resource Recreation and Tourism program and the College of New Caledonia's Northern Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism program, who provided expertise and guidance. This support was invaluable, and the students' research and writing skills were rewarded — the students and Ms. Sharp went on to represent Canada at the GTTP competition in Bad Homburg, Germany, meeting and learning from exceptional tourism students and educators from around the world.

Involving Students and Growing the Program

PGSS' CATT Gold program has evolved over the years. Not long ago, business teacher Ivan Ng began teaching Tourism 11 and Tourism 12 when Ms. Sharp moved to another school. Mr. Ng wanted to preserve the school's association with CATT because he believed it was a supportive and rewarding program for the students, and its objectives and mandates were in line with his expectations as an educator. He appreciated that the program's criteria gave students something more to strive for than just earning a grade and a school credit. Mr. Ng has ensured the PGSS program will continue to enhance participants' employability skills should they choose to pursue a career related to tourism. He, too, has attended the CATT National Conference, sharing ideas with fellow tourism educators and learning from their experiences.

Students are heavily involved in designing their learning, as self-discovery is an important component of the program. Assignments and projects lend realism to what has been learned in class, and provide the opportunity to practise newly developed skills. Students are given choice in terms of project topics and style of delivery. Some have given presentations where they act as a tour guide to promote a selected city or country. Others have delved into the many details necessary for planning a trip for potential tourists, including budgeting, creating an itinerary, and arranging activities. Still more have learned about advertising by creating a poster or brochure to promote a tourist attraction in Prince George, or by designing a map to support local tourism.

To encourage student participation in CATT, school counsellors introduce the program during class registration time each year. They talk about what it entails and the many opportunities it affords. Word of mouth from former students of the program plays a huge role in recruitment, as their experiences and enthusiasm strongly promote the Academy to the younger grades.

Reception to the program has been extremely strong, with current and former students—and their parents—sharing positive remarks. Students attain a lot out of the program's classes, and find that the skills and knowledge they acquire spark an interest either in pursuing tourism-related post-secondary studies or in immediately beginning work in the sector after high school. Parents value the certificate courses offered in conjunction with the program and appreciate the skills and discipline learned by the students.

With all this positive feedback, Mr. Ng recommends other schools join CATT as soon as possible to benefit their students and boost their tourism programs. All stages of the program offer success: the school can offer a wider range of classes for its students, graduates increase their employment potential, and local industry gains workers with training, experience, and an enthusiasm for the tourism sector.

As testament to the excellence of its program, several PGSS students have won post-secondary scholarships over the years. With such a strong history and an enthusiastic current coordinator, the PGSS Gold CATT program will continue to thrive. The school's commitment to the Academy and the ongoing support of local businesses and post-secondary institutions will see students and educators continue to build on this CATT success story.