

Quaaot Lodge

Video Clip 2: Employees

Cammeo: [Please note that this transcript has been modified; it is not a verbatim transcription.]

Cammeo: We do hire local community members, and we train them in any department that they want to learn to work in. So, I've had them in housekeeping. I've had them at front desk. Our kitchen definitely has had them. So, yeah.

Q: Is there a preference? Like if you had somebody with, well, equal qualifications, how would you make a decision? Or is it more that you would encourage the community involvement? So much that you would also say, like, you train them when they get hired, that you might go with... Like, okay. You know? You might not have the same, I don't know what they are, diplomas or something in that environment, but we'll train you because we want more community involvement.

Cammeo: I haven't run into that one yet. Normally when I'm looking for housekeepers, I need you, so I actually haven't run into that one yet. Yeah.

Q: Anything else? We have all that on the culture. If you have any other comments, because I mean, we talked about the history and the--

Alex: So, we talked about the language classes, so all of our staff now--

Q: Right.

Alex: So, every department is able to take part in local Secwépemc language classes. So, we do those twice a week. For all of... We

did them most of December, and we're now going into January. So, we're continuing those sessions, and really our goal with that is just to get all our staff familiar with the local language, and then when we greet people at front desk, we can greet them with Secwépemc language. Email correspondence, we always start with a local hello and thank you. So, yeah. That's kind of our goal with the language classes, and it's going really well. Yeah.

Cammeo: And our staff are also allowed to take part in the storytelling in the kekulis. They're allowed, you know... They take part in drum making. We tend to do sessions once or twice a year for the staff. And so, while that's happening, they're told stories and they get to know the backdrop of the lodge itself too, so you know, if they run into a guest in the hallway or in the lobby and they have some questions about the pictographs or what have you, they know a little bit of the story. Right? So, it's just giving the information to the employees, so that they can pass it on as well.

Q: Yeah, it's... I told them earlier, there's an annual report in the rooms. So, it was actually the sharing of the language with one of the... I don't know. It was a focus for this one. I think it was from last year. Right?

Cammeo: Yes.

Alex: Yeah.

Q: It talked about 2018. So, for last year, it was a focus to share the language and put more effort into educating people.

Alex: Yeah.

Q: You mentioned that you are from Bella Coola, and that you

came here and you saw it, and that was the only place you wanted to work in. What were the top reasons why that came to your mind?

Cammeo: I just walked in, and it's just such a beautiful, beautiful place. And what the Quaaout Lodge stands for for the local community is absolutely amazing. But when I walked in, I just found myself so calm and so grounded, and at home, you know? We went for dinner. We had a great romantic evening, my husband and I, and I just fell in love with the feeling of this place. And yeah, so I didn't go back to work anywhere else.

Q: And you?

Alex: Same thing. That, and just the reputation of the place too. It was so amazing to hear how the golf course was doing and the lodge itself. And again, I walked in and had my interview, and I just actually walked around the property afterwards, and I was just, like, wow, this is so amazing. It's so unique and really special to be a part of. Yeah.

Q: And the part of the community that works here, would you say that it's a great place? Do you feel looked after as you look after people? You know, because you're looking after the guests, but do you feel that you're looked after? Does that feeling that you first had when you walked in here prevail?

Alex: Yeah. We have a really amazing team here too. So, our peers are absolutely amazing and support systems that we have.

Q: We know this is an unfair question.

Alex: Yeah.

Q: You can say, "No. I don't want to talk..."

Cammeo: We are a family here.

Alex: Yeah, for sure.

Cammeo: We're not segregated by our departments by any means. You know? We are a family. We communicate with one another. We lean on each other. We talk, you know, just simple menu changes or room packages and stuff. We listen to each other--

Alex: It's a team effort, for sure.

Cammeo: --and, you know, it's not just, "Oh, this is my department." It's everybody's, and we work together with employees and everything, so--

Alex: Yeah.

Q: Sorry. I just felt like the answer would be positive, so I felt it was safe to ask it, and then as soon as I said it, I'm, like, this is probably not--

Alex: No, no. It was fine.

Q: Good.

Q: Any challenges as it is growing? You probably employ a few more people now--

Cammeo: Getting ready--

Alex: Yeah. Staffing is actually a challenge--

Cammeo: Staffing is hard here.

Alex: --for summer. Staff accommodation we're a little bit limited on that, so getting someone that can drive, either from Salmon Arm or Chase or Kamloops as well as... Yeah, just having the proper... That wants to be here that much and that can travel that distance. That's certainly hard because we do have limited staff accommodation out here. Yeah, so that is one challenge for staffing. I know you find that a little bit more than I do, but yeah.

Q: That may be better now that the peaks are less. You know? As you were saying that the business is more steady, rather than peak seasons--

Cammeo: Yeah.

Q: --because then you would have to... Yeah.

Alex: Yeah. Exactly.

Cammeo: But the hard thing is that we are still that hidden gem. Right? So, what Alex is saying is no matter what, you're going to have to travel at least half an hour to get here to work. So, that is a huge challenge. You know? Alex travels from Kamloops. Our GM travels from Salmon Arm. It's great that we have business year-round, but driving those roads in the middle of winter--

Alex: No.

Cammeo: Or even in summer during peak season when there's so many people on the roads. Right?

Alex: Yeah.

Cammeo: So, it is hard finding employees that can travel.

Q: In that radius. Yeah.

Cammeo: Yeah.

Alex: We have been looking at doing employee share programs though, so I think you've talked to Sun Peaks and just kind of trading off employees. So, their off season is opposite of ours. Right?

Cammeo: So, I'm actually--

Q: That's a good idea.

Alex: Yeah.

Cammeo: I'm actually doing it currently with Mustang Powder, so they

have two of my housekeepers, currently. And so that's what they do is in the wintertime, they take a couple of my workers, and they go and they work there. And then, the workers are guaranteed to come back. Yeah.

Q: Oh, amazing. Yeah.

Cammeo: And we've talked to Sun Peaks to do the same thing. But the problem that we have with that is staff com. Because Sun Peaks has so much staff accommodations up there, even if we were to take a simple 10 workers, say, for housekeeping. I don't have the accommodations for that, so--

Q: Do you have a plan for the future to--

Cammeo: Yes. We are looking at staff com, a bigger staff com. Yeah.

Q: What about, like, I don't know—whether it's carpooling, shuttling, whatever—you have the two main, like Kamloops and Salmon Arm, as like the--

Cammeo: We've thrown that around as well as using the shuttle buses as well. So, these are all avenues that we've looked at, so--

Alex: Yeah.

Q: You go around the clock though, so that's an additional challenge.

Cammeo: That is a thing, is the 24/7. Yeah.

Alex: And then the other thing is if, even if there is a shuttle, do they want to commute 45 to an hour every day still? So, it makes an extra longer day. Right, so--

Cammeo: Yeah.

Alex: It's just finding the right people.

Q: Because I remember when I got here, people had stayed here after the holiday party. Right? Because the roads were so bad--

Alex: Yeah.

Cammeo: Yeah.

Q: They all go home, usually, but they didn't. Because of the party, but then also--

Alex: Yeah, exactly.

Q: --the roads. Yeah. I didn't know that was, like... I guess I didn't imagine so many people would come from both ends of Salmon Arm and Kamloops.

Alex: Yeah, actually quite a bit of our staff is from Salmon Arm.

Q: That's quite the drive. Right? Because it would have been an hour--

Alex: Salmon Arm is about 30 minutes to 45.

Cammeo: About 45. Yeah.

Alex: Yeah, and Kamloops is 45 to an hour. Uh-huh.

Q: I'm surprised that so many of--

Q: --the wintertime with the hills and things like that.

Cammeo: Well, it keeps the employees busy too. Right?

Q: Yeah, exactly, because you don't--

Cammeo: So, it makes sense.

Q: --want to--

Cammeo: It makes sense. Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Because it's difficult to get them--

Cammeo: To keep them. Yeah.

Q: --because it's such a small community, then you want to--

Q: In terms of employee retention, do you tend to get long-term employees, or is it a lot of turnover more than a general... another kind of hotel?

Cammeo: I mean, in the summertime we have summertime students that come and then they go. But, you know, I've got people that have been here for over 12 years. I've got... I had a laundry lady that was here for well over 20 years. One of my night janitorial, he's been here basically since the doors opened. So, we've got a chef that has been here over 16 years. Our general manager, he's actually been here for over nine years. So, we do have a lot of really good retention, but people are going to come and go. Right? We do get a lot of university students. We get a lot of students straight out of high school. But being able to see them grow and leave us sometimes, that's the success. Right? We've given them that stepping stone into one industry, and whether or not they choose to stay in tourism or move on, that's for them to decide, so--

Q: And again, from previous comments, you don't focus on them... Or you don't even prefer them having, like, an Indigenous background. You prefer to train them on the things like the language courses and pictographs, everything you have around here. Maybe introduce them to it and train them on it, rather than expecting that they have a background in it? Is that correct?

Cammeo: No. I think that we treat everybody equally. It doesn't matter who you are to us. We haven't run into that, so I think that whoever comes through those doors, right, we're welcoming to. We haven't run into the situation of being, you know, overstaffed at any given time where we can turn people away

and pick and choose. There's a lot of different skillsets that are needed in this building. So, I think that if you walk through those doors, we're going to find something for you. You know?

Alex: Yeah.

Cammeo: You know?

Q: Is there anywhere else within the reservation, the band area, that they may be trying to accommodate people living here more, so that you have more choice? Because it is a problem that they have to commute so much.

Cammeo: It's something that we're looking at. I know that it is something in the capital for the next couple of years, but I'm... Adam would know more about that or the band themselves. You'd probably have to ask. Right? That's not us.

Alex: Yeah. Not for us to talk about. Yeah.

Cammeo: Yeah.

Q: If they would accommodate, it's just more people can be on site or as close as you can get.

Cammeo: Yeah.

Alex: Uh-huh.

Q: Okay. Thank you so much.

Cammeo: Thank you.

Alex: Awesome. No problem.

Q: That was amazing.

Please note that this transcript has been slightly modified; it is not a verbatim copy of the original audio clip.