

Going Places

Saskatchewan's Tourism Industry Newsletter

Winter 2016



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Cover Image

ExploreSask Photo Contest entry,
Nathan Jones, Ness Creek Area

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Bookmark Industry Matters

The dedicated industry website, IndustryMatters.com, is your one-stop site for the latest news and information from Tourism Saskatchewan and the province's tourism sector. You will find information on partnership opportunities, upcoming events, education and training programs and more. Bookmark IndustryMatters.com and visit often!

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR LEVERAGING SASKATCHEWAN'S TOURISM BRAND

Tourism Saskatchewan launched a new brand for marketing Saskatchewan's tourism experiences in April 2015. The brand reflects the qualities that position Saskatchewan as unique and memorable, and make it distinct from other destinations.

- Brand Position: This beautiful and vast land draws us together
- Brand Proposition: Time slows – and as you relax, you connect with the people around you
- Brand Pillars: Land and Sky; Time and Space; Community

Tourism businesses can incorporate elements of the brand into their own marketing activities. Here are some tips for leveraging the brand while putting your own, unique stamp on materials and messages that promote your operation.

1. DEVELOP MESSAGING THAT REFLECTS THE BRAND PILLARS

- Land and Sky – Build on the elements of wide-openness, geographic wonders and the closeness that people feel under magnificent skies, both night and day;
- Time and Space – Emphasize the laid-back nature and relaxing pace that afford time to connect with the people around you;
- Community – Visitors to Saskatchewan are made to feel welcome and included in events or activities. They become part of the community, part of the family.

2. USE PHOTOGRAPHY THAT REFLECTS THE BRAND

Great images have the power to communicate an intriguing message and command attention. Highlight the feeling of inclusiveness – the “we” and “us” – and stress that Saskatchewan provides the time and space to connect with what is important – family, community, meaningful relationships, and “in the moment” experiences. Feature impressive images of the land and sky. Photography that is authentic, that illustrates the story of people and experiences, is one of your most influential and effective tools.

3. HIGHLIGHT SASKATCHEWAN STORIES

Storytelling appeals to the emotions and is a powerful marketing tool. The character and essence of this province are shared through stories of its history and its people. Saskatchewan roots run deep and the province leaves an indelible impression on those who call the province home and on those who visit.

Combining impressive imagery and compelling stories creates formidable marketing materials that illustrate the vast and beautiful spaces unique to Saskatchewan. The options are limitless – from capturing the essence of complete calm and solace in the outdoors to pristine lakes teeming with world record-size fish to roaring rivers and challenging geography where adventures await.

4. USE A CONFIDENT, WELCOMING TONE AND SHOWCASE THE UNEXPECTED

Impress travellers with scenes of majestic landscapes, thrilling adventures and events they cannot afford to miss. Stress the unhurried pace that allows for true relaxation and escape, and suggest options – quiet getaways, rural hospitality, urban staycations, etc.

5. EMPHASIZE FRIENDLY, DOWN-TO-EARTH PEOPLE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Saskatchewan hospitality is second-to-none. Stress the warm, neighbourly character of Saskatchewan residents, along with the special places where people connect and the celebrations that bring them together. Consider community events, music and cultural festivals, farmers' markets, culinary events, etc.

If you have questions about how to leverage the brand and enhance your marketing efforts, contact Joy Turner, Manager of Marketing, 306-787-5282, joy.turner@tourismsask.com.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

For Tourism Saskatchewan, the new year marks the beginning of our cycle of consumer shows. There is a

wide variety of shows to consider. Our choices are always based on comprehensive research. We invest our time and resources in markets that offer a strong return-on-investment and hold great potential to entice new visitors to Saskatchewan.

The outfitted fishing strategy, delivered by Southwick Associates last May, provided some new options for promoting Saskatchewan's world-class fishing experiences. Visiting anglers from the United States are an important market for us. Nurturing relationships and ensuring repeat visitors makes good business sense. From the research conducted, we know where there are high concentrations of travelling anglers in the U.S. In addition to attending some traditional consumer shows in 2016, Tourism Saskatchewan and several of our partner outfitters will be at the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in February.

Last year, we sent a representative to the Outdoor Writers Association of America Conference (OWAA), held in Knoxville, Tennessee. This show marked the start of the

three-year commitment to work with the OWAA membership through our Travel Media program. Saskatchewan has an abundance of stories and adventures to inspire these writers, so we are hoping for good results.

For our friends at Tourism Saskatoon, 2016 was ushered in by the exciting news that the city made two national travel "best of" lists. *WestJet Magazine* named Saskatoon on its "Where to Go in 2016," featured in the January issue. Along with this shout out from a major airline, Saskatoon received recognition from the Canadian travel website Vacay.ca, making its list of "20 Best Places to Visit in Canada for 2016." Congratulations to Tourism Saskatoon and its media team. They are valuable partners and we appreciate their collaboration on travel media FAMS and so many initiatives that bring profile to our province.

Recently, I read a wise piece of advice from educator Anthony J. D'Angelo – "Develop a passion for learning. If you do, you will never cease to grow."

Keeping up on trends and implementing new ideas to improve your business are very important for any organization or business operator. Every year, Tourism Saskatchewan organizes the annual *HOST Saskatchewan Conference* to inform operators and tourism

organizations on the latest trends and provide tools to improve your business. I realize that attending the event is a significant commitment for our operators and we appreciate the efforts to join us. We are currently finalizing the entire agenda but I am pleased to announce that we have Tod Maffin, well-known futurist and author, as one of our keynote conference speakers. His visionary approach to digital marketing has positioned businesses, large and small, on the route to success. I am certain there will be lots to learn from Tod's presentation.

Tourism Saskatchewan is also excited to host the province's first *Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference* on June 15 in Saskatoon. This will be another opportunity for industry to gain knowledge from some impressive speakers and presenters. The conference theme, *Customer Experience – Beyond Good Service*, speaks to anyone who has a stake in our province's tourism industry. Keynote speaker Chris Gibson is a renowned expert in that field. Through his storytelling, he engages audiences and challenges operators to take a fresh approach to customer service.

Mary Taylor-Ash
@MaryTaylorAsh

HOST Saskatchewan Conference Mark your calendar – April 14-15

A great lineup of speakers and presenters is planned for the *HOST Saskatchewan Conference*, April 14-15 at the Ramada Plaza Regina. Register now to secure your spot at this valuable industry forum. The cost is \$269 plus GST, which includes a ticket to the 27th annual *Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala*. Online registration is available at IndustryMatters.com.

The doors open at 9:30 a.m. Sessions begin at 10 a.m., and a noon keynote luncheon will feature Greg Johnson, Tornado Hunter. Johnson was recently named to the list of Canada's Top 100 Explorers. By nature, he is an adventurer and storyteller, and firmly believes in the "bucket list" philosophy. His presentations included vivid photography from his travels around the world capturing "extreme weather moments."

Day one of the conference will conclude with the *Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala* at the Conexus Arts Centre.

A keynote brunch will close out the conference the next morning. Tod Maffin, renowned digital marketing strategist, is the keynote speaker. Maffin addresses audiences worldwide, sharing his expertise and his insights on technology and the future of business. He was one of the Internet's first webmasters and created a site that ranked 8th best in the world and beat out heavyweights such as Sony, Microsoft and AT&T.

A full conference agenda will be posted on IndustryMatters.com. Watch for upcoming *Industry Updates* for additional details.



HOST Saskatchewan Conference keynote speakers
Left to right: Greg Johnson, Tod Maffin

Southwick Fishing Strategy recommendations



Hatchet Lake Lodge

PART TWO: SHOWCASE YOUR BEST FEATURES

In 2014, Tourism Saskatchewan commissioned Southwick Associates to conduct a study of anglers in the United States in order to gain a better understanding of the U.S. customer base and to provide recommendations for retaining and expanding Saskatchewan's share of the U.S. market. Southwick Associates delivered a comprehensive outfitted fishing market strategy for Tourism Saskatchewan in May 2015.

Part one of a two-part feature in *Going Places* appeared in the Fall 2015 issue and focused on nurturing relationships with current customers and attracting new clients. Part two offers recommendations on showcasing your impressive assets to entice customers.

1. MARKET FISHING

Survey results reveal there is not a strong interest among existing Saskatchewan anglers or non-Saskatchewan travelling anglers for activities unrelated to fishing. First and foremost, these guests are coming here to fish. Some niche markets likely exist for combined activities (e.g. bear hunting, etc.) that may be suited to marketing combined activities for specific lodges. **Focus your efforts to attract anglers to Saskatchewan on angling opportunities and enjoyment.**

2. INCORPORATE STRENGTHS INTO MESSAGES

A feeling of safety and security ranked as highly important to anglers looking for a place to fish. Saskatchewan scored high in the perceptions of safety. Additionally, helpful and friendly people appeared as a strong non-fishing selling point for the province. These messages should be incorporated into fishing-related advertising campaigns. Promotional activities and campaigns should also strive to boost awareness of visitors' high satisfaction with catch rates and numbers of trophy-sized fish caught. **Play to Saskatchewan's strengths: safe vacations, friendly people, great fishing.**

3. SHOW OFF SASKATCHEWAN'S NATURAL BEAUTY AND BIG FISH

There are misconceptions about Saskatchewan not having wilderness experiences as impressive as our competitors. Efforts to change this misunderstanding through advertising and marketing may increase the number of first-time visitors. Additionally, non-Saskatchewan anglers have a lower perception of the fishing quality compared to other destinations, indicating that successfully promoting the high quality of fishing may entice new anglers to discover Saskatchewan. **Let U.S. anglers know about Saskatchewan's pristine wilderness and trophy-sized fish.**

4. BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHS ARE KEY TO ATTRACTING CUSTOMERS

Many U.S. anglers are unfamiliar with Saskatchewan's natural beauty and the great fishing offered here. The best way to show your product is through visually striking images. Pictures of trophy-sized fish and beautiful wilderness settings will entice customers. **Hire a professional photographer or encourage customers to share photos of impressive catches.**

5. MAINTAIN AND EXPAND ANGLER CONNECTIVITY

The emerging angler base is more concerned with maintaining connection with others during their fishing trip than the current older demographic. Advertising campaigns should stress that travelling to Saskatchewan to enjoy a wilderness experience does not mean completely losing Internet/cell phone coverage. Lodges should be aware of this customer concern and, where possible, maintain services such as free Wi-Fi to satisfy their expectations. **Keep your customers connected.**



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The announcement of the 2016 *Saskatchewaner* on January 8 generated excitement about a new “ambassador” who will be touring the province and posting highlights on social media. Neil Fisher was chosen from a pool of nearly 50 talented candidates, and Tourism Saskatchewan is pleased to welcome him to his new role.

Over the course of the year, he will visit Saskatchewan communities, attractions and destinations, as well as explore various industries and some of the opportunities in this province for entrepreneurs and people seeking rewarding careers. We look forward to reading Neil’s blogs and seeing his year unfold as he posts illuminating highlights and photographs on *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Twitter*.

A partnership between Tourism Saskatchewan and three government ministries – Agriculture, Economy and Parks, Culture and Sport – supports the full-time *Saskatchewaner* program. Getting the *Saskatchewaner* from place to place, safely and comfortably, is made possible through the generosity of CAA Saskatchewan.

This issue of *Going Places* reports on the work underway to develop and implement a Quality Experience Strategy, a key action identified in Tourism Saskatchewan’s *Strategic Plan 2014-2016*. The process is led by a solid team of consultants. Jill Vandal (the Tourism Company) and Chris Hughes (BC Hughes) have vast experience and a record of success working with operators and destinations across Canada.

Tourism Saskatchewan embarked on the process of developing our new strategic plan in November. Gathering input from industry is an important step. Over the last couple of months, consultation with destination areas, sector associations and individual operators has yielded crucial information that will help shape the direction that we take in the coming years. We value and appreciate the involvement of industry in this process.

The *HOST Saskatchewan Conference* in Regina on April 14-15 will provide the Board of Directors a chance to meet and mingle with the people who drive Saskatchewan’s diverse tourism sector. My colleagues and I look forward to this opportunity to learn from industry and from some of the renowned speakers scheduled to appear. We encourage you to register and play a part in this important assembly of Saskatchewan’s tourism sector. A highlight will be the *Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala*. Join us in celebrating achievement in our industry.

Norm Beug

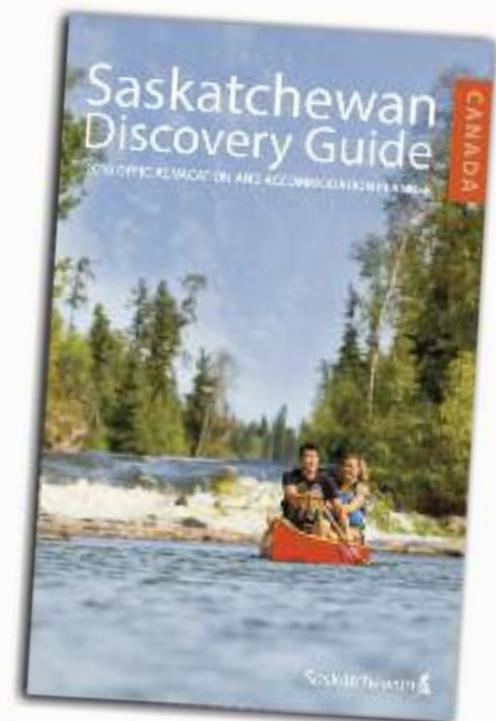
Stock your shelves with copies of the 2016 *Saskatchewan Discovery Guide*

The 2016 *Saskatchewan Discovery Guide* is now available for bulk orders from tourism operators and stakeholders. Make travel planning in your community easy for your customers by keeping a supply of guides at the front desk, in hotel rooms or on display racks.

The *Saskatchewan Discovery Guide* is a valuable travel planning tool. Compact enough to fit in your backpack, but jam-packed with information, the guide is 400 pages of essential vacation planning content packaged with the *Official Saskatchewan Road Map*. Accommodations, attractions and events are organized for quick reference. Indexes make it easy to find a park, golf course, event or community. Additional information includes travel itineraries, must-see checklists and tourism hotspots.

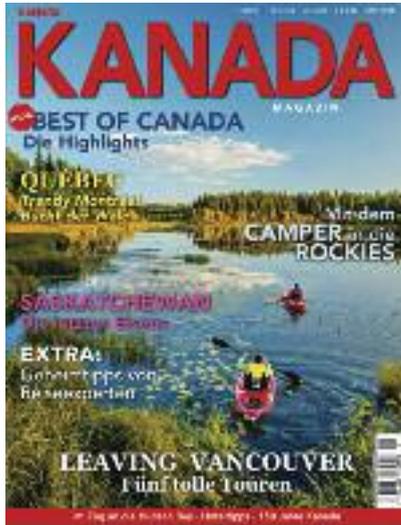
The 2016 *Saskatchewan Fishing & Hunting Guide* is also available for bulk orders and distribution.

Ensure that your business has plenty of travel guides in stock to share with your customers and visitors. To order you FREE bulk quantities, contact Patti Peesker, Literature Distribution Coordinator, at 306-787-2420 or email patti.peesker@tourismsask.com.



Selling Saskatchewan

TRAVEL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Last summer, Tourism Saskatchewan hosted a number of travel media, including eight writers from Germany. It can take several months for travel journalists to publish articles about their trips. However, Ulrich Krumstroh shared his account of being a guest at La Reata Ranch shortly after his visit to Saskatchewan. Krumstroh's story (written in German), along with his photography can be viewed at www.t-online.de/reisen/aktivurlaub/id_75786928/la-reata-ranch-die-farm-des-deutschen-cowboys-in-kanada.html.

Oliver Gerhard, another German travel writer hosted in July, produced a beautiful five-and-a-half page spread in *Kanada Magazin*, with a Saskatchewan image gracing the cover of the

January 2016 issue. The focus of his story is on Prince Albert National Park, with emphasis on Grey Owl's Cabin and Sturgeon River Ranch. A smaller feature showcased Ghosttown Blues Bed & Breakfast in the Cypress Hills.

Fishing is always a huge draw for travel writers, and 2015 was no exception. Cree River Lodge hosted a group of fishing writers including David Allan Brown, who has already produced several posts on outdoorlife.com about his trip to Saskatchewan. Brown was obviously impressed by the monster pike found here, which was the subject of his post "Pike Paradise."

Trends in Canadian travel trade

Like any sector, the group travel industry must be inventive and flexible to meet the demands of change. Two current challenges are demographic shifts and the Canadian versus U.S. dollar debate.

Baby Boomers and early Gen-Xers continue to push tour operators to find and provide quality travel experiences for the best possible price. These travellers have done their research and they know what they want. They are active, worldly, price savvy and on the lookout for bigger adventures.

Finding the best deals is important, and they want flexibility, choice and convenience. For service providers, offering incentives to tour operators in addition to providing that "hook" of why your product should be considered will give you a competitive edge.

When it comes to pricing and outbound travel, the exchange rate between the Canadian and U.S. dollar presents a complex situation for North American tour operators offering trips to the United States, as well as those who have cross-border offices. Different types of travellers offer different challenges. Student groups, for example, perceive the U.S. as a somewhat exotic destination. They are willing to pay a higher price to travel there.

The adult market is a different story. Some operators have had to cancel tours to the U.S. to avoid losing money. Many operators are keeping both U.S. and international itineraries on offer, but are looking at ways to make the packages more affordable. Some that have cross-border operations are encouraging their American clients to travel to Canada to take advantage of the exchange rate.

The trend of "staycation" planning is on the upswing, with many Canadians considering taking their next vacation within Canada. This invariably leads operators to consider increasing their Canadian product to meet the surge in demand.

If you are interested in learning how you can get involved in the Canadian group market, contact Travel Trade Consultant Heidi Wesling, 306-798-3168 or email heidi.wesling@tourismsask.com. Wesling recently attended the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA) conference in London, Ontario. The OMCA Marketplace is the premier event in Canada for North American packaged travel. Over a period of four days, buyers and sellers meet in pre-scheduled one-on-one business appointments. The 2016 OMCA Conference and Marketplace will be held in Niagara Falls, Ontario from October 30 to November 2.

Consumer Marketplace Partnership success stories

Both the Cypress Hills Destination Area and the Watrous Manitou Marketing Group have taken advantage of the Consumer Show Support program and report many positive experiences and outcomes. Brendan Manz, Community Development Officer for Watrous-Manitou Beach Tourism, sees the consumer shows as an excellent chance to interact with potential visitors and discover new markets, gather business intelligence to take back to partners and learn about different demographics. While at the shows, he is able to see the real impact of his marketing efforts, and he appreciates opportunities to hear people's stories, concerns and experiences first-hand.

Gail Kessler, Executive Director of the Cypress Hills Destination Area, considers trade shows a great way to challenge people's perception of the province. She has seen real results from talking to people in person. For example, last fall she encountered a visitor at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park whom she met at the 2015 Calgary RV Show. Kessler's pitch about the Cypress Hills Destination Area definitely had an influence on this traveller and it was encouraging to see him enjoying his Saskatchewan vacation.

Manz and Kessler both see the benefits of partnering with each other, and with Tourism Saskatchewan. Both regions have different tourism experiences but target similar demographics. It is a win-win because of the cost savings and the ability to reach more consumers, and there is agreement that working collaboratively sends a positive message to the public.

Consumer Marketplaces Funding Partnership

Tourism Saskatchewan has a comprehensive offering of partnership opportunities to assist operators with marketing their products and experiences. The Consumer Marketplaces Funding Partnership brings operators face-to-face with potential visitors. It has two components: Consumer Show Support (introduced in 2012-2013) and the Marketplace Application Fund (2013-2014).

Key consumer shows (mainly in Saskatchewan and Alberta) are identified that target priority markets and provide Saskatchewan operators the opportunity to sell their travel product and showcase the province as a destination. In the Consumer Show Support program's first three years, nearly \$180,000 of funding was approved, enabling 230 operators to attend 49 consumer shows.

The Marketplace Application Fund is an additional opportunity for Saskatchewan tourism operators to participate in shows that are not available through the Consumer Show Support program. Its primary focus is on opportunities in the long-haul market, for example fishing and hunting shows in the United States. In its first two years, funding of approximately \$35,000 supported 30 Saskatchewan operators and involved 22 shows.

Applications are being accepted for the 2015-2016 Consumer Show Support partnership. Forms are available on IndustryMatters.com under Promote Your Business. The application deadline is 30 days prior



Edmonton Home and Garden Show partnership with Tourism Saskatoon to the show; however, some opportunities sell out, so submit your application early to secure a spot.

For information on the Consumer Marketplaces Funding Partnership, contact Kelly Brezinski, 306-787-2219 or email kelly.brezinski@tourismsask.com.

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR SUCCESS AT CONSUMER SHOWS

There are many advantages to attending consumer shows and marketplace events, and making face-to-face contact with thousands of potential visitors. Thoughtful planning, well in advance, will help you make a positive first impression and influence consumers. Here are a few tips to get the most out of your efforts.

1. DO YOUR RESEARCH

- Market and show selection are integral to success at any trade show. Once you have determined your market and which shows are suited to your business or attraction, book early to get the best price and booth space. Book your furnishings and booth services early to receive the show discount.
- There are prime spots on the trade show floor that provide the best exposure. Avoid the space closest to the entrance. People tend to walk by to check out the rest of the show and may not notice you. The show organizer can help you determine high traffic areas.

2. SHOW YOUR BEST SIDE

- Looks are everything. Your booth appearance alone should attract prospects. Choose an open design and high quality, appealing visuals.
- Feature up-to-date photos that are evocative and trigger a positive emotional response. Select images of people having fun or experiencing memorable moments. Use photography to lure customers and strike up conversations.
- Display up-to-date, informative literature about your business and distribute freely to potential customers.

3. MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION

- Keep the booth clean, tidy and well-organized. Wear company-branded gear and comfortable shoes.
- Always be ready to engage a prospect. Greet customers in the aisle with a warm smile, and make eye contact. Be enthusiastic, confident and polite when they approach your booth.
- Stay on your feet. A person sitting seems unapproachable. If buyers want to learn about your product and you make no effort to stand and greet them on their level, they may feel snubbed and take their business elsewhere.

- Keep booth chatter to a minimum. Customers, not colleagues, should be the focus of your attention. Be aware of what is happening on the floor and do not ignore passing customers.
- Avoid eating in the booth. Limit phone use to a minimum.

4. ENGAGE AND QUALIFY YOUR PROSPECTS

- Ask open-ended questions to gauge the prospect's travel interests and intentions. From this information, you can determine whether they are a qualified customer and how much time to devote to them.
- Once you have captured the attention of potential customers, give them reason to stay engaged in the conversation. Make them the focus and give them your full attention.
- Sell them on your business. Have your pitch prepared well in advance and know it inside-out. Be convincing and clear about what makes your business and destination unique. Use your passion and conviction to seal the deal.
- Know how and when to disengage. People who simply want to chat may be taking you away from potential qualified customers. Be polite and steer the conversation to a close by saying "Thank you for this opportunity to talk," or "I think that I have taken enough of your time today. Thank you for stopping by our booth." Offer a handshake and perhaps an inexpensive takeaway item.

5. KEEP IN TOUCH WITH QUALIFIED PROSPECTS AND CONTACTS

- Capture names and email addresses of qualified contacts. Promptly follow up with an email or electronic newsletter.
- Developing relationships with potential customers is a key step to attracting them to your business or destination.
- Deliver on your promise. You do not have to be a five-star property to impress guests. It is the quality of service and the effort that you put into the relationships that will keep your customers coming back year after year. These satisfied, loyal clients will champion your business to their friends and family.

In Development

Experts talk experiential tourism



Chris Hughes

Developing Saskatchewan experiences is one of Tourism Saskatchewan's strategic priorities, as identified in the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan. Key actions to achieve this goal include the development and implementation of a Quality Experience Strategy.

Last fall, Tourism Saskatchewan contracted the Tourism Company and BC Hughes to work with the Product Development department to design a program for expanding experiential tourism in Saskatchewan. Both companies have extensive experience in assisting destinations to develop and market their tourism resources.

Jill Vandal is a partner in the Tourism Company, a Toronto-based firm that has assisted destinations throughout Canada. Vandal has spent more than 22 years as a professional tourism consultant and is well-known in Saskatchewan for her mentorship, advice and workshops that have benefited tourism operators and organizations. In recent years, her focus has been on experience development. She is one of a handful of professionals certified by Destination Canada (DC) as an Explorer Quotient Accredited Trainer (EQAT), enabling her to provide clients with additional insights on groundbreaking market segmentation research.

Chris Hughes' company, BC Hughes, based in Owen Sound, Ontario, has gained a solid reputation for its work in tourism development, management and marketing, and has shown many rural operators and communities how to tap their potential and become memorable destinations. He has more than 15 years of



Jill Vandal

experience in the field and is known for his focus on "the little things that make great destinations" but are often overlooked. Signage and wayfinding, maps, parking, washrooms and comfort stations, for example, are critical to offering great service and making travellers happy. Hughes has a gift for getting operators and destinations serious about these and other issues.

In addition to working with several operators, Vandal and Hughes will be developing a framework for experiential tourism that will build knowledge, explain the fundamentals of creating "awe moments" and identify ways to work with the province's tourism brand pillars: Land and Sky; Time and Space; and Community.

They sat down with us to talk about the project and answer a few questions.

Is there a simple definition of experiential tourism? How do you explain it to operators who may be interested or have a product to offer?

Chris Hughes: No, (laugh) there is no simple definition. The term has been trending the last few years as a buzz-word for what today's savvy traveller is seeking. The reality is that experiential tourism has been around since the first person ventured beyond their habitual daily routine to learn, be surprised and do something out of the norm. The word "experience" is defined as "the accumulation of knowledge or skill from direct participation in events or activities." Adopting this philosophy into your business is relatively easy. It's about identifying

all of the touch points where a guest interacts with you, and finding ways to surprise them. Do the unexpected and create a series of unforgettable moments. It can be as simple as asking a guest to go to the garden to pick their own strawberries for breakfast, or showing them how to fix their own flat on a bicycle trip. It's a creative process that is used to develop that authentic sense of place that we all seek as travellers.

Who are the primary markets? What are the interests and expectations of these experience-seeking travellers?

Jill Vandal: Every traveller is seeking an experience by the very fact they are travelling. The primary markets for unique Saskatchewan offerings are typically well-travelled visitors from Canada, the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom, who are curious by nature and want to discover more about the places they visit and the people who host them. They expect quality from start to finish and are captivated by hosts and operators who have a genuine interest in their guests. The secret to success is to understand what motivates each traveller and which ones are suited to what is offered. Explorer Quotient (EQ) research is one tool that will help you do that. EQ profiles go beyond describing where visitors come from and when they travel, to describing the social and travel values that drive their decisions. Some travellers want to experience the landscape in a physically challenging activity with other like-minded guests. Others want to get up close and personal with a ranch owner, farmer or craftsman in a less structured, more spontaneous way. In each case, it's the chance to create a very personal memory.

What excites you about working with Saskatchewan operators and developing an experiential tourism framework?

Chris Hughes: Applying the philosophy to surprise guests requires creativity to generate memorable experiences. The tourism industry in Saskatchewan is full of highly industrious people oozing with creativity. We want to help break traditional stereotypes (or at least leverage them) and show the world that a visit to Saskatchewan is full of incredible surprises.

Who are some of the leaders in experiential tourism in Canada? What are some of the innovative models or success stories?

Jill Vandal: O'Brien's Whale and Bird Watching Tours out of St. John's, Newfoundland is a great example of quality and moments of awe. Their two-hour Tours Tasting and Tails offer is a favourite of visitors who want to combine viewing puffins, humpback whales and icebergs with a visit to the home community and

brewery of Quidi Vidi Brewery – tasting included. Even if nature does not co-operate, visitors leave with a feeling of awe due to the stories told and the personalities of those leading the tour.

The half-day, all-inclusive family adventure Giant Bar Clam Dig, offered by Tranquility Cove Adventures in Prince Edward Island, combines clam digging and steaming them over a driftwood fire on a beach on a private island, a stop at the oldest lighthouse in P.E.I. and learning (and doing!) the tricks of the trade from a third-generation fisherman.

Each of these operators tells stories in a very personal way that engages visitors. So often, what we take for granted in our own backyard actually interests travellers because it is new to them. The operators also combine their own

story with those of the community. The success stories come from operators who embrace the commitment it takes to identify and train the storytellers, who open their business before or after traditional opening times for behind the scenes tours or who invite visitors to share their daily routine. Understanding how to operationalize this type of innovation leads to success.

What types of businesses are ideal for offering experiential tourism?

Chris Hughes: It's an approach that can be easily applied to all sectors in the industry. Some of the greatest surprises come from where you least expect. WestJet is a classic case. Imagine, over-the-top customer service from an airline? Our goal is to demonstrate that creating experiences is not just the job of the outfitter or the rancher. It encompasses all elements of the

visitor journey and creates an incredible opportunity to tell the Saskatchewan story along the way.

What is important for interested businesses to consider?

Jill Vandal: We will challenge business owners and their delivery partners to create offers to put Saskatchewan on more travellers' "I need to visit" list. The process that we will guide them through requires commitment and takes time. Operators will create enhanced or new buyable offers with big and small moments of awe, meeting the needs of their target guests while meeting their own business needs. Who wouldn't want to attract new or higher paying visitors? We will also share success stories with program participants to inspire and motivate them. It's worth the investment. And we will have fun!

Event Hosting Program

Spring intake deadline: March 31, 2016

Tourism Saskatchewan encourages communities, festivals and event organizers to submit applications to the Event Hosting Program, which provides funding through four program streams: Community Annual Events; Marquee Annual Events; National and International Events; and Special Tourism Projects.

Funding applications for the next intake period can be submitted online beginning February 1. The intake deadline is March 31.

A new online application process has been designed to provide better service to industry and collect beneficial feedback from stakeholders. Visit IndustryMatters.com/event-hosting-program to learn more about the program and to submit an application.

Dozens of applications are received during fall and spring intakes. These submissions come from worthy organizations and communities throughout the province. Evaluations are based on specific criteria and objectives relating to each program stream.

It is important to read the criteria and ensure that you provide relevant information in your application. Keep in mind that different funding

programs have different requirements. For instance, funding programs specific to the arts or to sports have their own set of questions and their own expectations of the applicants seeking support.

The Event Hosting Program challenges applicants to look at their event through a tourism lens and consider the potential for tourism and economic growth. Numbers are important and it is to your advantage to provide solid evidence and figures. Show funders that you have measures in place for tracking data key to determining outcomes and planning for the future.

To assist you in completing your funding application, download "Top Five Tips for a Successful Event Funding Application," available at IndustryMatters.com/promote-your-business/topfivetips.

If you have questions about the Event Hosting Program or the application process, contact Tyler Lloyd at 306-787-5525, tyler.lloyd@tourismsask.com.

Tourism Saskatchewan is a proud partner in hosting these major events in 2016

Ford World Women's Curling Championship, March 19-27, Swift Current

Team Canada and athletes from 11 other countries will compete for the world championship title in women's curling. Swift Current is hosting the international competition for the second time. In 2010 when the world's top female curlers and legions of fans descended on the city, more than 500 volunteers drove the success of the event. The 2016 competition will take place at Swift Current's Credit Union iPlex.

BreakOut West, October 13-16, Regina

The Western Canadian Music Alliance announced in November that BreakOut West would return to Regina in 2016. The city last hosted the showcase in 2012. BreakOut West is a combination music festival, conference and annual celebration of the *Western Canadian Music Awards*, which honour excellence and achievement among western Canadian artists.

Around the Province

In the Spotlight

Recipients of the *Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence* earn their place in the spotlight by demonstrating exceptional work and a commitment to treating visitors to great service and experiences. Throughout the year, *Going Places* profiles those who took top honours at the *Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala* in April. In this issue, we are pleased to highlight the following award winners.



Robin and Arlene Karpan, Saskatoon, Travel Media Award
Sponsored by the Saskatoon Media Group

Robin and Arlene Karpan are Saskatchewan writers, photographers and publishers. Their popular book *The Great Saskatchewan Bucket List: 50 Unforgettable Natural Wonders to See Before You "Kick the Bucket"* was published in 2012 and revised in

2014. The publication highlights Saskatchewan's most spectacular natural attractions. Now in its fourth printing, the book has sold over 11,000 copies and is still going strong. *The Great Saskatchewan Bucket List* not only shows tourists 50 top natural wonders but helps them get to these sites. The Karpans also wrote four pieces that appeared in *The Western Producer* in 2014, covering Saskatchewan destinations from the coulees of Eastend to the wild landscape of Athabasca Sand Dunes Provincial Park. They are well-recognized travel journalists and photographers who have both been awarded the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal in recognition of their work.

Visit parklandpublishing.com to learn more about this award-winning team and their work.



LB Distillers, Saskatoon, Business of the Year Award (Under 20 Full-time Employees)

Sponsored by the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

LB Distillers is a premium micro distillery and tourism destination in Saskatoon. The company offers hand-crafted spirits, cocktail bitters and liqueurs with an emphasis on locally sourced materials. The distillery is proud to mash, ferment,

distill and barrel-age its products in Saskatoon. In only two years of operation, the distillery has sold 65,000 litres in more than 250 bars and restaurants, as well as off-sale locations and SLGA liquor stores around the province. LB Distillers' simple and straightforward values have enabled the company to create outstanding products that showcase Saskatchewan's amazing grains and fruit and provide enjoyable experiences for customers. For information about the company's products, to arrange a tour or inquire about hosting an event at the distillery, visit luckybastard.ca.

Introducing the 2016 Saskatchewaner



Neil Fisher, 2016 Saskatchewaner

Neil Fisher was announced the 2016 *Saskatchewaner* on January 8. Nearly 50 applications were received for the position. Fisher's resume spoke to an impressive body of work that included photography featured on the cover of the *National Post* and *The Vancouver Sun* and in the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. His video footage has been seen around the world and aired on major news networks in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Fisher grew up in Coquitlam, British Columbia, but currently calls Saskatoon home. "I'm beyond excited!" he said. "I've already done a fair bit of exploring here in Saskatchewan, but I still see it as an exotic far off land with countless wonders waiting to be discovered. A great Canadian, Chris Hadfield, said 'Exploration stretches our understanding' and I can't wait to give the world a better understanding of what this amazing province is all about."

Fisher has travelled along Canada's west coast, through the prairies and has been on excursions to Australia and the Arctic in the pursuit of capturing his experiences via photographs and video to share with the world through his blog and social media.

"The *Saskatchewaner* program offers us an opportunity to showcase our diverse province to a large audience," Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport Mark Docherty said. "Neil has a unique background of work and travel, and he's turning his passion into a career. We look forward to seeing his photography and videography talents highlight the many amazing people and places of Saskatchewan."

"Neil has an exciting year ahead of him as the 2016 *Saskatchewaner*," Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan Jeremy Harrison said. "He has an important role to play, promoting the province's wealth of attractions and events, as well as the jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities in tourism."

CAA Saskatchewan has been involved in the program since 2011. As exclusive sponsor of the 2016 *Saskatchewaner*, CAA Saskatchewan will provide Fisher with a vehicle, CAA membership and gas vouchers to make his travels through the province safe and uncomplicated.

Planning is underway for Fisher's 2016 travel schedule. Story ideas are welcome and can be submitted via *Facebook* ([facebook.com/skwanderer](https://www.facebook.com/skwanderer)), *Twitter* (@skwanderer) or *Instagram* (@saskatchewaner). To keep up with Fisher's latest blogs, follow him on *YouTube* ([youtube.com/user/skwandererofficial](https://www.youtube.com/user/skwandererofficial)), or visit saskatchewaner.ca. Watch for his column about his adventures in upcoming issues of *Going Places*.

Tourism Trends

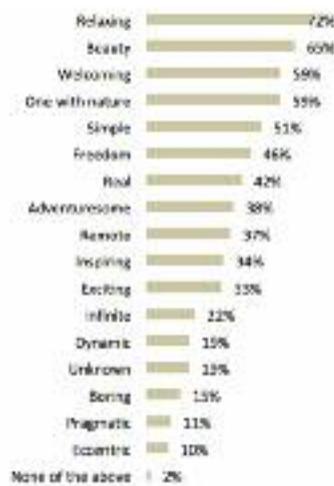
Research behind the brand

Tourism Saskatchewan launched a new tourism brand for the province in April 2015. Three brand pillars were introduced: Land and Sky; Time and Space; and Community.

Comprehensive research was required to identify these three themes, which serve as a foundation for Tourism Saskatchewan's marketing and promotional activities.

Ten focus groups were held in 2014 in primary markets – Alberta and Saskatchewan – and involved 83 participants. They were a mix of individuals who have vacationed in Saskatchewan and people whose common mode of transportation while holidaying is their own vehicle. Two Alberta focus group sessions were exclusive to travellers who had never vacationed in Saskatchewan. These sessions were important for gauging perceptions about the province as a potential destination.

Two online surveys were conducted with 2,500 consumers in Alberta and Saskatchewan in 2013. A survey exercise involved ranking words that are commonly associated with Saskatchewan. The province's relaxing pace and atmosphere, its impressive natural beauty and the welcoming character of its people rated favourably.



The research identified Saskatchewan's distinguishing and attractive characteristics, and clarified what is unique to our province – what Saskatchewan "owns." It provided insight into the public's understanding and impression of the province and yielded heartfelt stories and testimonials about the profound influence this place has on both residents and visitors.

SUMMARY

Vacationing in Saskatchewan is about being "connected"

Emotion	Trigger
• Nostalgic	• Spending quality time with family (extended or nuclear) and friends
• Relaxed	• Watching kids play
• Romantic	• Making memories
• Love	• Food
• Playfulness	• Connected
• Relief	• Shared activities (such as fishing, getting massages or having coffee together)
• Safe	
• Satisfied	
• Content	
• Happy	
• Joyous	
• Proud	
• Free	
• Warm	
• Togetherness	
• United	



Emotion	Trigger
• Free	• Being outdoors
• Empowered	• Travelling to the destination
• Awe	• Scenic events such as sunsets, northern lights
• Wonderment	• Diverse landscapes (unobstructed views, trees, lakes, sand dunes, hills)
• Anticipation	
• Inspired	
• Relaxed	
• Serene	
• Tranquil	
• Proud	
• Refreshed	
• Excitement	

Emotion	Trigger
• Relaxed	• Getting away from it all
• Calm	• Independent activities (such as reading)
• Peaceful	• Taking time to reflect on things
• Stress-free	• Being yourself
• Wonder	
• Gratitude	
• Peaceful	
• Free	
• Childlike	
• Light-hearted	
• Playful	

SUMMARY

Distinguishing factors

- Family element emerged as the strongest distinguishing factor for Saskatchewan.
- Many participants, especially those who have never vacationed in Saskatchewan but drove through the province, state that the friendliness and down-to-earth attitude of the residents encourages them to consider vacationing in Saskatchewan.
- Saskatchewan is seen as an outdoorsy, laid back and simple province. Most participants claim that the simplicity of the province is its charm.

What makes Saskatchewan vacations different?	Characteristics
----------------------------------------------	-----------------

- Space
- Friendliness
- Safety
- Unexpectedness
- Diverse landscape

- Family oriented
- Hard working
- Down to earth
- Outdoorsy
- Wholesome
- Old fashioned
- Simple

What do tourists coming to Saskatchewan seek?	Personality of tourists visiting Saskatchewan
-----------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------

- Family time
- Relaxation
- Simplicity
- Serenity
- Time with nature
- Comfort
- Affordability

- Laid back
- Family oriented
- Enjoy outdoors
- Simple
- Proud of Saskatchewan as their province

Interactive Insights

Promoting Saskatchewan fishing experiences online

Saskatchewan is a renowned trophy fishing destination. The province is famous for its 100,000 lakes and rivers and is recognized, in fishing circles, as a place where the dream of a world record catch can become reality.

Angling is a significant part of Saskatchewan's diverse tourism sector. It is a popular source of recreation for residents and is a main attraction for many visitors from the United States. Tourism Saskatchewan has been hosting a dedicated website, fishing-in-saskatchewan.com, since 2009. The intent was to feature detailed fishing information, solicit user-generated content and provide profile and links to the province's fishing outfitters. In Tourism Saskatchewan's 2014-2015 fiscal year, the site recorded more than 223,000 visits.

A lot has changed since the site was launched seven years ago. Advancements in technology, new market research and recommendations from the outfitted fishing strategy delivered by

Southwick Associates in 2015 are driving Tourism Saskatchewan's new approach to marketing fishing online.

Content from fishing-in-saskatchewan.com is being transferred to the main website, TourismSaskatchewan.com, for a number of reasons. The online world is going mobile and our angling content will now be much more accessible via phones and tablets.

The fishing pages within the mobile-optimized TourismSaskatchewan.com will still provide the same detailed fishing information that potential visitors need, but with a modern, mobile-friendly design and improved functionality. You can check out the new look at FishSask.com.

The adoption of social media by travellers, including anglers, has skyrocketed. Tourism Saskatchewan's dedicated activities and efforts on social media have brought significant profile to the province and to Saskatchewan



experiences. Keeping consumers engaged and enlisting their help in generating content and sharing their photographs and stories lead to widespread benefits. A dedicated fishing page on *Facebook* continues to attract followers. Check out [facebook.com/FishingInSaskatchewan](https://www.facebook.com/FishingInSaskatchewan).

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR USING TRIPADVISOR TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

Online customer reviews are now a fact of life in the tourism and hospitality industry. Word-of-mouth and customer recommendations have always been one of the greatest sales drivers for tourism businesses. Now that those endorsements have moved online and are easily shared around the world, it is more important than ever to manage your business' reputation.

Here are some tips for monitoring and responding to comments posted about your business.

1. COMPLETE AND UPDATE YOUR PROFILE

Ensure that your profile is up-to-date with an official description, complete list of amenities, links to your website and recent high-quality photos.

2. ENCOURAGE GUESTS TO POST REVIEWS

Many hotels, attractions and businesses place prominent links on their own websites to *TripAdvisor* reviews of their property. Research shows that consumers are going to seek out that information anyway. Why not provide a courtesy and make their journey easier? Also, encourage your guests to write about their experience. Ask them directly or remind them with posters, feedback cards, etc.

3. MONITOR YOUR BUSINESS REGULARLY

Stay on top of online reviews and monitor *TripAdvisor* at least once a week – more often if the number of reviews warrants that attention.

4. RESPOND TO REVIEWS APPROPRIATELY

Do not ignore negative reviews, but respond in a calm, professional and timely manner. Ask permission to contact the reviewer directly via a less public forum (such as email or telephone) to get more details about the complaint.

Often, a simple explanation of the circumstances or clarification of a misunderstanding can resolve an issue. Acknowledging a complaint and, when necessary, providing some compensation is often enough to turn a bad customer experience into a positive one. Those inclined to post negative reviews are equally inclined to post about how happy they are that reparations have been made. They can become influential ambassadors for your business.

5. USE POSITIVE REVIEWS TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

Consumers search vendor websites for details and information, but they look to sites like *TripAdvisor* to read about actual experiences. Delivering great service and positive guest experiences will result in an increase of favourable reviews and, in turn, promote your business for you.

Saskatchewan Provincial Parks gearing up for another exciting year*

The crackle of the campfire and the call of the loon are closer than you might think. Planning is well underway for the 2016 season. This planning comes on the heels of a record-breaking 2015 – Saskatchewan Provincial Parks recorded nearly 3.9 million visits last year. So, 2016 is sure to be busy!

The nightly camping reservation launch will move to April, so that it does not overlap with the provincial election. The reservation launch will follow the same format as in 2015, using a queuing system during high-demand times over a 10-day staggered launch. Check out saskparks.net for more information about when each park will be available for booking.

Saskatchewan Provincial Parks launched a successful “Learn to Camp” program in 2015. This program offers people who are new to camping the opportunity to learn the basics. This program, which is perfect for anyone who is looking to reconnect with nature, will be offered again in 2016. Visit saskparks.net/LearnToCamp for more details.

Saskatchewan Provincial Parks continues to invest in improving the infrastructure in the parks. In fact, over the past eight years, nearly \$92 million has been spent on parks capital projects. Part of that investment has been in building new campgrounds to meet the high demand for camping in the province.

A new, full-service campground opened at Greenwater Lake Provincial Park in 2015. This summer, Blackstrap Provincial Park will open its new campground, featuring a mix of full-service and electric campsites. In addition to these campground developments, many other projects have been undertaken across the parks system. These projects include the replacement of campground and day-use service centres, upgrades to and replacement of boat launches, expansion and improvement of electrical service for campsites, new campsite furnishings and much more.

Saskatchewan Provincial Parks remain one of the most popular tourism draws in the province. Visit saskparks.net and start planning your Saskatchewan vacation today.

Government House celebrates its 125th anniversary*



Government House, Regina

Government House will be bustling with activity in 2016 during its 125th anniversary. There is something for everyone – a new signature tea, a sparkling crown pendant, book launches, Regina Symphony Orchestra concerts, new exhibits and educational programming, and a large celebratory event later in the year.

The Government House Historical Society will also be marking a milestone with its 25th season of Victorian Teas. These teas began in 1991 as a one-year project to celebrate the centennial of Government House. They have become a much-loved tradition that has carried on year after year. The Victorian Teas will be held one weekend a month in 2016, from March until December.

In April, Government House will open a new feature exhibit, The Story of Government House: Past 125 Years. This exhibit will showcase original artifacts and their individual stories,

along with photos showing the stages of evolution of Government House, and will offer engaging programming.

The summer will see the return of the ever-popular *History Alive! Vignettes*. Visitors can watch life unfold for Saskatchewan’s first Lieutenant Governor Amédée Forget and his wife Henriette. These live theatrical vignettes will be performed throughout the summer season at both Government House and the Saskatchewan Legislative Building. Government House will also offer garden tours, customized picnic baskets and geocaching, as well as a public movie night in August.

In September, special anniversary events and programming will culminate with a large “At Home” celebration, resembling one of the open door receptions hosted at Government House during its early years.

Government House is located at 4607 Dewdney Avenue and is open 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday during the winter and seven days a week during the summer season. Admission is free and donations are accepted.

For more information about events and programs at Government House, visit saskatchewan.ca/governmenthouse or call 306-787-5773. For the latest news, you can also follow Government House on *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

**Articles submitted by the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport*

STEC News

Speakers announced for inaugural *Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference*



Chris Gibson

Plans are in full swing for Saskatchewan's first *Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference*, which will take place on June 15, 2016 at the Sheraton Cavalier Saskatoon Hotel. Tourism Saskatchewan and STEC are proud to host this important forum that will provide practical, progressive HR strategies to strengthen business and enhance the province's tourism sector.

The conference theme is *Customer Experience – Beyond Good Service*. Keynote speaker Chris Gibson is a well-known and respected authority on customer service. In his presentation *The Disney Story*, Gibson will share insights on the iconic company's customer service strategy and practices that have built loyalty and led to more than 30 million repeat visitors

annually. His presentation will provide delegates with knowledge on the following:

- How to build a customer service culture;
- Mapping out a solid customer service strategy;
- Dealing with service breakdown; and
- Setting yourself up to exceed customer expectations.

The afternoon schedule offers sessions and presentations that will provide ideas and inspiration for success with business, careers and employee professional development.

Delegates will value a presentation made by Michelle Shepherd, Station Manager with WestJet (based at Saskatoon John G. Diefenbaker International Airport). WestJet is renowned for its creative approaches to customer engagement and for its commitment to a dynamic workplace and to service excellence. In her presentation, Shepherd will share some of the stories behind the airline's success.

An educators forum, led by Tourism HR Canada (formerly the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council), will provide secondary and post-secondary educators with tools and resources for incorporating tourism training into their programming.

The conference will provide opportunities for developing, recognizing and rewarding staff for their dedication to professional development and service excellence. The evening will mark the 23rd annual *Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner*, which honours individuals who have achieved professional certification or journey person status. *Employers of Choice* will also be acknowledged. A highlight will be the presentation of the *Tourism Ambassador Awards*.

Who should attend? Mid-level managers of a tourism property or business, frontline employees considering tourism as a career, as well as *emerit* certified employees and those currently enrolled in certification.

The registration cost is \$99 plus GST, and includes a ticket for the *Tourism Professional Recognition Dinner*. For individuals who are being honoured at the dinner, a special registration fee of \$55 plus GST is offered. To register, visit IndustryMatters.com.

Sponsorship packages are available to interested businesses. An investment in Saskatchewan's first *Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference* brings profile to participating organizations and to their work and achievements in human resources. Three levels of sponsorship are available and each includes opportunities for staff to attend.

To inquire about sponsorship, contact Darcy Acton, Labour Development Retention Consultant, 306-933-7466 or email darcy.acton@tourismsask.com.

A full conference agenda and additional details will be posted on IndustryMatters.com.

Saskatchewan welcomes tourism and hospitality graduates from the Solomon Islands

The Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association (SHHA) announced in October an agreement struck with the Solomon Islands Guadalcanal Province that will help new tourism professionals gain valuable work experience.

Graduates of the Guadalcanal Province Hospitality Program will have an opportunity to work in Saskatchewan in a temporary capacity with participating SHHA members. These graduates will acquire first-hand experience in the tourism and service industries that will help advance their careers. At the same time, they will be making an important contribution to Saskatchewan's tourism sector.

"Employers in many communities across the province are experiencing labour shortages and are finding it very challenging to maintain minimum staffing levels," SHHA President & CEO Jim Bence said, adding that the SHHA needs to be creative in addressing some of the challenges that members face. Bence stated that the partnership "represents a unique and exciting opportunity to satisfy the needs of both [SHHA] members and the Government and people of the Solomon Islands."

An education partnership between Guadalcanal Province and the Canadian International Training and Education Corporation (CITREC) has been beneficial to preparing qualified candidates for work in Saskatchewan's

hospitality industry. The Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC) provides national *emerit* and Saskatchewan-specific programming to CITREC, which is incorporated into international training programs. The graduates coming to the province have been exposed to Saskatchewan and Canadian knowledge and skill requirements through their studies in the Solomon Islands.

"Our graduates are job-ready. They are equipped with Canadian qualification and are ready to enter your growing industry," Honourable Rollen Selesco, Deputy Premier of Guadalcanal said. "With the job experience they obtain in Saskatchewan, upon returning home they will be able to contribute to the Solomon Islands' growing tourism sector. We have a win-win situation."

"We support the Saskatchewan Hotel and Hospitality Association and their members in recruiting employees for their growing industry," Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan Jeremy Harrison said. "The recent graduates from Guadalcanal will return to the Solomon Islands with experience in a tourism industry known all over the world for exceptional hospitality."

Here & There



Cross section of mammoth tusk discovered near Saskatoon. Fracturing radiates from the core of the tusk in ring-like fashion.



Plaque unveiled at Moose Jaw Court House reopening by Gord Wyant, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Jennifer Campeau, Minister of Central Services, and M.D. Popescul, Chief Justice, Court of Queen's Bench.



Saskatoon chefs on the Gold Medal Plates podium. Photo by Stephanie Strauss Hall.

Record visitation to Saskatchewan Provincial Parks in 2015

Saskatchewan's provincial parks and recreation sites hit a new attendance record of nearly 3.9 million visits in 2015. This is an increase of nearly 125,000 visits over the previous record, which was set in 2013, and is an increase of more than 860,000 visits since 2007.

Strong visitation can be attributed in part to the province continuing to provide excellent visitor services and the enhanced capital infrastructure investment. Since 2007, nearly \$92 million has been invested in capital projects, including upgrades and maintenance. These projects have provided enhanced services such as new campgrounds, upgraded washroom and shower facilities and expanded electricity to more campsites. In addition to capital improvements, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport continues to expand program offerings. For more information about Saskatchewan's provincial parks, visit saskparks.net.

2015 Gold Medal Plates Saskatoon

Saskatoon chefs went head-to-head during the 10th anniversary of Gold Medal Plates, held on November 20. Chef Darren Craddock from the Riverside Country Club took the top award for his Saskatchewan-foraged preparation of wild boar. He is a past medalist, having won gold in 2012 and silver in 2014. Chef Craddock will compete at the Canadian Culinary Championships, February 5-6 in Kelowna, B.C.

The silver medal went to Chef Scott Torgerson of the Radisson Hotel whose creation was a traditional French pheasant dish with a distinct Saskatchewan twist. Chef Darby Kells, owner of Riverside Deli and Capanna Pizzeria, was awarded the bronze medal for his innovative preparation of pork tenderloin and accompaniments that included edible soil and flowers. Kells is celebrated as a role model among the tourism sector and received the *Tourism Ambassador Award* in the Food and Beverage Services Industry at the Saskatoon *Professional Recognition Dinner* in June 2014.

Gold Medal Plates is a celebration of Canadian excellence in food, wine, athletic achievement and entertainment. The series of events has raised over \$9.5 million for the Canadian Olympic Foundation, a charitable organization that generates support for the technical, scientific, medical and coaching needs of Canada's athletes across all Olympic sports. For more information, go to goldmedalplates.com.

Mammoth tusk housed at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum

The Royal Saskatchewan Museum (RSM) has confirmed that a fossil discovery east of Saskatoon is a preserved mammoth tusk. The museum was contacted in early October by an employee of Inland Aggregates, who made the discovery at a work site. RSM staff worked quickly to preserve the tusk and prevent damage from exposure to air. The museum's collection of mammoth remains is mostly isolated bones and teeth except for a partial skeleton found near Kyle, SK.

The RSM has taken a lead role through *The Heritage Property Act* in managing the provincial fossil record. If members of the public or industry discover what they believe to be a fossil, they are encouraged to contact the RSM at 306-787-2815, email info@royalsaskmuseum.ca.

Historic Moose Jaw Court House reopens

The Government of Saskatchewan and the Courts of Saskatchewan announced on December 15 that the historic Moose Jaw Court House is once again open to serve the people of Moose Jaw and surrounding area. Built in 1909, the property is Saskatchewan's oldest court house and is home to the Court of Queen's Bench. A ceiling collapse two years ago suspended activity within the building. Court was relocated while repairs took place.

The Moose Jaw Court House was designated a Provincial Heritage Property in 1988. Renovation design and construction focused on restoring the building to its original condition, which included using turn-of-the-century construction

methods such as lath and plaster instead of the more conventional drywall. Construction officially started in October 2014 and wrapped up in November 2015. Staff moved back into the building in December and court sittings have resumed.

Save the date for Saskatchewan Tourism Week – May 29-June 4

Saskatchewan Tourism Week will be celebrated province-wide from May 29 to June 4. These dates coincide with *Tourism Week in Canada*. It is a time for tourism businesses, operators, attractions and destinations across the country to stand united and promote awareness about a dynamic industry that annually contributes more than \$88 billion to the Canadian economy.

Travel expenditures in Saskatchewan reached \$2.15 billion in 2014, and there were more than 12.5 million visits to and within the province that year. As of August 2015, almost 65,000 Saskatchewan citizens were employed in tourism.

Communities throughout Saskatchewan mark the occasion with events and festivities that encourage residents to discover some of the tourism resources in their own backyard and explore unique destinations and sites elsewhere in the province.

Watch for details about *Saskatchewan Tourism Week* on IndustryMatters.com.

Mark Your Calendar

PUBLIC EVENTS

Saskatoon Farmers' Market
Year-round.....Saskatoon

Regina Symphony Orchestra Government House Concert Series
September 26, 2015-April 24, 2016.....Regina

Canada: Day 1, Western Development Museum
December 19, 2015-March 27, 2016.....Moose Jaw

RCMP Sergeant Major's Parade
January 4-December 16, 2016.....Regina

Frosted Gardens
January 29-February 19, 2016.....Saskatoon

Prince Albert Winter Festival
February 10-21, 2016.....Prince Albert

Saskatchewan Equine Expo
February 11-14, 2016.....Saskatoon

Love's Annual Valentine Winter Festival
February 12-13, 2016.....Love

Waskesiu Snow Days
February 12-21, 2016.....Waskesiu Lake

2016 Red Bull Kite Farm
February 13-15, 2016.....Regina

Living Sky Casino Powwow
February 13-14, 2016.....Swift Current

Saskatchewan FREE Ice Fishing Weekend
February 13-15, 2016.....Province-wide

Heritage Day, Western Development Museum
February 14, 2016.....Yorkton

Canadian Challenge Sled Dog Race
February 22-27, 2016.....Prince Albert to La Ronge

Mid-Winter Blues Festival
February 22-27, 2016.....Regina

Saskatoon Blues Festival
February 22-28, 2016.....Saskatoon

StirCrazy Blues Festival
February 25-27, 2016.....Swift Current

2016 Provincial Snowmobile Festival
February 26-27, 2016.....North Battleford

Denare Beach Winter Festival
February 26-27, 2016.....Denare Beach

Fort Winter Festival
February 26-28, 2016.....Fort Qu'Appelle

Regina Farmers' Market
March 5-December 17, 2016.....Regina

SaskTel Jibfest
March 5, 2016.....Mission Ridge Winter Park, Fort Qu'Appelle

Prairie Sun Seed Festival
March 12, 2016.....Yorkton

What Women Want
April 1-3, 2016.....Regina

First Nations University of Canada Annual Spring Celebration Powwow
April 9-10, 2016.....Regina

Kalyna Festival of Ukrainian Dance
May 6-8, 2016.....Yorkton

Veselka
May 7, 2016.....Foam Lake

Vesna Festival 2016
May 7, 2016.....Saskatoon

Saskatchewan Fashion Week
May 12-14, 2016.....Regina

Saskatchewan Highland Gathering and Celtic Festival
May 21-22, 2016.....Regina

Cathedral Village Arts Festival
May 23-28, 2016.....Regina

Yorkton Film Festival – Golden Sheaf Awards
May 26-29, 2016.....Yorkton

38th Annual Saskatchewan Marathon
May 29, 2016.....Saskatoon

Saskatchewan Tourism Week
May 29-June 4, 2016.....Province-wide

Mosaic 2016: A Festival of Cultures
June 2-4, 2016.....Regina

PotashCorp Children's Festival of Saskatchewan
June 4-7, 2016.....Saskatoon

Canada's Farm Progress Show
June 15-17, 2016.....Regina

Southern Saskatchewan Summer Solstice d'été Festival
June 17-19, 2016.....Gravelbourg

Bazaar
June 18, 2016.....Regina

Humboldt Summer Sizzler
June 18-19, 2016.....Humboldt

Nipawin Great Northern Pike Festival
June 19-September 30, 2016.....Nipawin

SIGA Dakota Dunes Open (PGA Tour Canada)
June 20-26, 2016.....Dakota Dunes Golf Links, Whitecap Dakota First Nation

Long Day's Night Music Festival
June 23-26, 2016.....Swift Current

SaskTel Saskatchewan Jazz Festival
June 24-July 3, 2016.....Saskatoon

SaskPower Windscape Kite Festival
June 25-26, 2016.....Swift Current

Frontier Days Regional Fair and CCA Rodeo
June 29-July 2, 2016.....Swift Current

INDUSTRY EVENTS

2016 HOST Saskatchewan Conference
April 14-15, 2016.....Ramada Plaza Regina

2016 Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence Gala
April 14, 2016.....Conexus Arts Centre, Regina

Tourism Workplace Leadership Conference
June 15, 2016.....Saskatoon

TRADESHOWS/MARKETPLACES/FAMS TRAVEL TRADE:
Canada Shared
March 2-3, 2016.....London, UK

International Tourism Bourse (ITB)
March 9-13, 2016.....Berlin, DE

CONSUMER SHOWS:
Great American Outdoor Show*
February 6-14, 2016.....Harrisburg, PA

Edmonton RV Show
February 11-14, 2016.....Edmonton, AB

Calgary Home & Garden Show*
February 25-28, 2016.....Calgary, AB

Greater Philadelphia Outdoor Sportshow*
February 25-28, 2016.....Oaks, PA

Saskatoon Sports & Leisure Show
March 3-6, 2016.....Saskatoon

Medicine Hat Sunshine Expo Show
March 4-6, 2016.....Medicine Hat, AB

Swift Current Step into Spring Show
March 4-6, 2016.....Swift Current

Edmonton Boat & Sportsmen's Show
March 10-13, 2016.....Edmonton, AB

Saskatoon Homestyles Show
March 10-13, 2016.....Saskatoon

Edmonton Home & Garden Show*
March 17-20, 2016.....Edmonton, AB

International Sportsmen's Exposition (ISE)
March 17-20, 2016.....Salt Lake City, UT

Regina Spring Home Show
March 17-20, 2016.....Regina

Calgary Outdoor Adventure Show
March 19-20, 2016.....Calgary, AB

Northwest Sportshow*
March 30-April 3, 2016.....Minneapolis, MN

*Tourism Saskatchewan attends

STEC PROGRAMS/WORKSHOPS
WorldHost Fundamentals
February 9, 2016.....Regina

Serve It Right Saskatchewan Seminar
April 11, 2016.....Regina

Facilitator Skills Development Workshop
April 19-21, 2016.....Saskatoon

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:

TOURISM SASKATCHEWAN
189 - 1621 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada
S4P 2S5
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