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Local Prosperity 2016 Miramichi Conference Arts, Culture, and Tourism Panel Discussion Synopsis

Panelists:

Moderator: Adam Lordon; Ninen Productions & Freelance Producer and Director

Paul McGraw – Economic Development Officer & Experiential Tourism Expert

Lori McCarthy – Founder of CodSounds.ca a food-based experiential tourism product

Genevieve Coates – Founder of technology consulting company Generate Creative

Summary:

Our panel had two great sessions that focused primarily on the opportunities for growth and development of experiential tourism products in Atlantic Canada, as well as the opportunities to use technology, in particular social media and video content, to capture and promote tourism products (and all products) before, during and after the experience itself.

Paul McGraw was the first to speak and offered up some insight as to how anything and everything can be an experience with his personal motto “Every experience is a story, and every story is an experience”. He also mentioned the importance from a community perspective that everything in your city or town will reflect on the experience visitors have from the kids playing in the park, to the shop keepers, to the condition of the buildings.

Lori McCarthy was able to share a first example of her successful experiential food business Cod Sounds, where she takes visitors on an experience foraging for food and then has a traditional “Boil Up” and cooks for them on the beach. This takes traditional Newfoundland food and culture and packages it for tourist consumption. The panel believes this can be replicated in other communities and other cultural aspects.

Genevieve Coates shared the importance of embracing technology and the potential it has to enhance experiences, but also as a communication method. In smaller communities many people can be weary or uninterested in technological advances but they provide great opportunities to create efficiencies and savings, engage local audiences, and engage new ones.

Adam Lordon spoke specifically of the growth of video as a medium to communicate and share experiences, for tourism products and in general, especially when shared through social media. Video content can create awareness and a want in consumers. It is scalable based on budget constraints, and can reach audiences locally and from far and wide. It also creates the opportunity for your customers to become sales people by sharing their story of the experience you provided.

During the discussion periods there was great conversations about in particular getting the ball rolling on getting people in smaller rural local communities to understand and buy into the potential for experiential tourism products and technology. The panelists all agreed an inclusive, positive, non-confrontational approach is best. Also the importance of just starting, even on a very small scale, and allowing people to see the positive effects to create buy-in and encourage growth.

By Adam Lordon