



"a full day devoted to tourism"

South Cariboo Tourism Forum Summary

Submitted To: Joanne Doddridge, Director of Economic Development & Planning
District of 100 Mile House

Submitted By: Justin Rousseau, Managing Director, Expedition Consulting

Date: November 17, 2024

On November 5th, 2024, the South Cariboo hosted its first ever Tourism Forum at the Community Hall in 100 Mile House. The event was organized and sponsored by the District of 100 Mile House in partnership with the Cariboo Regional District and the South Cariboo Visitor Centre. The event was also sponsored by the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, the South Cariboo Chamber of Commerce and Cariboo Chilcotin Community Futures.

80 tourism partners attended the Forum and were treated to an upbeat and interesting day. The guest speakers were informative, and participants were highly engaged in the discussion. Networking was an important part of the day and tourism businesses, organizations and government agencies took the opportunity to get to know more about each other.

Morning Presentations and Discussion

The morning started with a networking opportunity followed by a presentation by Expedition Consulting that outlined the Community Tourism Plan. There was an enthusiastic large group discussion regarding implementation opportunities for the Plan. This was followed by presentations from the following organizations:

- Destination BC – Seppe Mommaerts
 - CCCTA – Amy Thacker
- South Cariboo Visitor Centre – Julie Gilmore
- District of 100 Mile House - Joanne Doddridge
 - Cariboo Regional District – Beth Holden
 - Community Futures – Karen Eden
- Land of the Hidden Waters / Fishing Highway – Irene Meili
 - Chamber of Commerce – Donna Barnett

Afternoon Presentations and Discussion

The morning presentations were followed by a networking lunch. It was excellent to see meeting participants engaged in discussions about how organizations can work together in the future to grow the visitor economy in the region.

In the afternoon, there were a series of presentations and facilitated discussions. The following topics were explored:

- Trends in Tourism – Seppe Mommaerts, Destination BC
 - Creative Staffing – Christine Blaquiere, GoToHR
- Dealing with Disaster – Leanne Sallenback, South Point Resort
- MRDT: Where does the Money Go? – Amy Thacker, CCCTMA
- What’s Working? What’s Not? South Cariboo Cooperative Marketing Program - Julie Gilmore, South Cariboo Visitor Centre

Key Take-Aways

- Participants expressed a strong desire to collaborate more in the future. Of particular interest was a desire to become involved in implementing the Community Tourism Plan. Attendees were provided an opportunity to sign up to participate in the Community Tourism Plan Task Force.
- The group echoed calls identified in the Community Tourism Plan for more coordination between tourism support organizations in the region. There are many organizations operating that offer different but sometimes duplicate services. It can be confusing to determine which groups to participate in.



- A spirited discussion occurred about the best way to move forward with cooperative marketing and destination development. The group discussed “pay-to-play” options and “membership-based” structures. There appeared to be strong support to work toward a future solution that would increase participation in cooperative programs.
- Acquiring adequate and affordable business insurance was identified as a top challenge for tourism businesses.
- Wildfires and the perception of wildfires was described as a key risk factor for tourism businesses. There is a need to seek solutions and to effectively communicate with customers. Closely related to this is the heat in the summer which may be causing cancellations and what some business call a “July dip” in sales.
- Tourism businesses described seasonality as a contributing factor to the challenge of attracting and retaining qualified staff.
- There was a feeling among many that there is an opportunity to tell the story of the value the visitor receives in the South Cariboo. A suggestion was made that increasing fees could better reflect that value and assist in recovering from the rising cost of inflation.
- A suggestion was made that more could be done to reduce red tape for tourism operators.
- Participants described the importance of nurturing a tourism brand for the region. Related to that was a desire to promote locally sourced goods and services.

Recommendations Moving Forward

1. Actively seek members to participate in the Community Tourism Plan Task Force and begin meeting within the next two months. It will be important that tourism businesses take a central role in the Task Force as they have a direct stake in the outcomes.
2. Once the Task Force is established, re-visit the priorities outlined in the Community Tourism Plan and start implementing the highest priority items.



3. Strike a committee to seek solutions regarding tourism business insurance and to rally for improvements.
4. Review the cooperative marketing program to determine the best model that will encourage enhanced participation and value.
5. Host another Tourism Forum within 12 months. The next forum should include more presentations from tourism businesses currently operating in the region. The event should continue to prioritize networking.
6. Make Forum materials available publicly and encourage those who could not attend to reach out and become involved. Create a database of interested parties and continue to engage with them in the coming months. Consider hosting more regular short networking opportunities that could be held virtually or in person. There is a need to build from the enthusiasm generated in the Forum.

