

Fort Smith Hosts Workshops for South Slave Tourism Development

A collaborative event spearheads discussion on the development and support of tourism industry in NWT's South Slave

Fort Smith, Northwest Territories: April 24, 2023

The inaugural South Slave Tourism Development Workshops took place on April 20-22, 2023 in Fort Smith, NWT. The event was hosted at and by the Salt River First Nation, in partnership with the Town of Fort Smith, the Town of Hay River and contributions from GNWT Industry Tourism & Investment. The event was spearheaded by local tourism and economic development staff and promoted cooperation between all organizations who hold stakes in the field of tourism in the South Slave region.

"The success of these workshops made it clear that tourism is a vital contributor to the economic growth of any region," said Diane Seals, the Economic Development Officer for the Town of Fort Smith. "Everyone who attended walked away with new insights, new connections, and a deeper understanding creating a thriving tourism business."

The workshops attracted 40 people from the private business sector and government, who were eager to learn from experts in the field. Most attendees hailed from Fort Smith or Hay River but did include residents of K'at'l'odeeche and Fort Chipewyan.

The content of the workshops was developed and facilitated by Firecircle, a company with 30 years of experience helping new and existing rural and remote entrepreneurs develop sustainable business models. Facilitator Deneen Allen, the founder and CEO of Firecircle led the discussions, which revolved around topics such as destination branding, marketing, pricing, partnerships and packaging.

Local entrepreneur Brenda Dragon provided an inspiring talk on the journey she's had while creating Aurora Heat, an internationally recognized brand selling reusable beaver fur warmers that started out of the Thebacha region.

Additionally, Chief Marketing Officer for NWT Tourism, Joel Walton, spoke about the Spectacular NWT brand and marketing in the Northwest Territories. Discussion revolved around where the South Slave fits into the NWT Tourism brand and how local businesses can be supported by the organization.

Participants were given the chance to experience tourism offerings in the Fort Smith area, such as visiting Wood Buffalo National Park, the Flat World Alpaca Farm, and doing an art project at the Northern Life Museum & Cultural Centre.

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The 2.5-day workshops were developed with the goal to inspire future tourism operators to develop their business plan and engage in initiatives that showcase the untouched beauty of the South Slave region.

For more information on the workshops, visit **[south slave tourism development workshops \(thefirecircle.ca\)](http://southslavetourismdevelopmentworkshops.thefirecircle.ca)**. For media-related inquiries and information contact **dseals@fortsmith.ca** 867-872-8400 or **tourism@hayriver.com**, 867-874-6522.

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