

**SMALL & RURAL
COMMUNITY
MARKETING
PROGRAM**

EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY

Community marketing program
created for small and rural Canada



“

The **BEST** thing that has happened in our community in the last 10 years!

”

Shelley Sanders
Canadian Country Music Heritage Society



Small Town Challenges

The reality is that big industry, small businesses, families, youth, skills and investments are leaving rural and small towns across Canada at an alarming rate.

"Between 2001 and 2016, the number of potential workers (in rural populations) has decreased -23.3%"

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

In order to survive, these towns must adapt and develop new markets and attract new sources of revenue and jobs.

Connecting Communities

To connect with more interest groups and attract new investments, small and rural communities must implement and maintain a targeted search engine and social media awareness campaign online. Why? Because every big decision is first searched online and your positive story needs to be there.

Everything Is Big City?

But there are big obstacles small communities face. One being that the community marketing models available today are built for well funded large cities with plenty of staff, skills, resources and time. There are no models available that are affordable and effective for small towns. Until now!

THE INDUSTRY



“ Developing a working model for online marketing is one of the most important, and sometimes elusive, tasks for small and rural community groups.

*Melvina White
Merritt City Councillor
VP Tourism Nicola Valley*

”

Survey of Rural Challenges (2019) asked rural and small town Canadians what challenges they most want help with?

Top Five Concerns :

1. Losing young people
2. Downtown is dead
3. Not enough good housing
4. Need new residents
5. No one shops in town

THE SOLUTION

The Answer

Our research efforts and development teams have created a proven, "first-to-market" community driven content marketing program specifically designed for small and rural Canadian communities.

Program Applications

- develop tourism seasons
- increase business downtown
- increase economic development
- attract new interest groups
- promote physical inventory
- promote small business / non profits / groups
- attract new investments
- attract new families
- attract / promote events
- increase community pride
- generate revenue

Program Advantages

- two interacting real-time websites
- three social media channels
- customizable
- affordable
- automated
- no hidden fees
- no additional staff required
- includes monthly skills training
- in house marketing services
- grant writing assistance available



“

The “Experience Community Program” levels the tourism marketing and promotion playing field between small and urban centres.

Amber Papou Vision Merritt

”



THE CASE STUDY

ExperienceNicolaValley.com / ExperienceMerritt.com

August 2018 - October 2019



THE ASSOCIATION

Tourism Nicola Valley (TNV) is a regional tourism marketing association representing the small communities of Merritt, Quilchena and Lower Nicola Valley, BC, Canada.

THE CHALLENGE

A key challenge in their online marketing strategy was their lack of internet visibility on search engines therefore a lack of community awareness online. TNV needed to market themselves effectively online so to attract new interests to the region.

With big industry slowing down and taking jobs with them, TNV needed to take action and be proactive and not reactive to a fast changing market. Steps were needed to grow new markets, extend tourism seasons and attract new investments to the region.

THE EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Tourism Nicola Valley selected a unique content and social media marketing program designed and created by top ranked content marketing specialists at eh Canada Travel.

The "Experience Community Program" consists of two interactive "real-time" content marketing platforms:

- ExperienceMerritt.com (a real-time community website on a national platform)
- ExperienceNicolaValley.com (a community blogsite).

The platforms are built with leading content marketing technology. Both platforms promote the region in real-time connecting travelers, investors and others directly with local business websites and social media channels. Participating locals, volunteers, small businesses, non profits, community groups, etc produce the authentic content via a customized online submission editing tool.

SKILLS TRAINING

The program includes a comprehensive content marketing, blogging and social media training program for community participants. Training is monthly and led by a top ranked content marketing specialist.

IN HOUSE MARKETING SERVICES

Content editing, SEO page optimizing, publishing and social media development and marketing services are available. You just write stories and we do the rest.

“ Tourism Nicola Valley (TNV) is proud to be working with eh Canada Travel in this new and exciting venture for smaller communities. TNV is impressed with the quality and speed eh Canada implemented the program and with the support they have provided. ”

Anoop Sekhon - President Tourism Nicola Valley

ANALYTICS

PROOF OF CONCEPT

2100+

new top 10 community key word search results on the first page of Google, Bing & Firefox

94%

percent increase in users, first quarter results.

2021 vs. 2020

52%

percent increase in views, year over year

2021 vs. 2020

11+

number of volunteers participating in the community blogging program

286+

number of authentic content pages published on internet

163%

percentage increase in viewership on talk show

September 2021

211,672

views

231 views a day on average

“

I want to thank Experience Nicola Valley and Experience Merritt for an excellent program. As well as, participating myself, I watch and hear some great feedback about your program. You have motivated us all very much!

Vicki Hanson
Miss Vicki's Petals & Plants

”

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



"The Experience Nicola Valley Program is a clear, well-designed marketing program having all of us in the business community moving in a positive direction. eh Canada Travel is doing a superior job at introducing more travelers to the valley." **Gurpreet Sekhon - Ramada Inn - Merritt**

"The Experience Nicola Valley Blog led by eh Canada Travel has created the positive energy and focus we need moving forward in the next 15 years." Kathy Castro - **Planet Hair and Spa**

"I wanted to pass along our sincere thanks for your generous support in my business. The Experience Nicola Valley & Experience Merritt Program has been a joy to watch and grow into what it is today - a major positive influencer online for attracting more people to our valley and to our business." Kelly Hanson - **Mellah Leuca Day Spa**

"eh Canada Travel has delivered an engaging and informative marketing platform in the way of Experience Nicola Valley Blogsite and Experience Merritt "Living" Website. It is an exciting, fresh and new approach to economic development that is receiving tremendous praise inside and outside the community." **Merritt Printing - Tod Dean**

"We are very excited about this project and specifically how it showcases and supports local businesses here in Merritt. The work that eh Canada has done on building this "Experience" brand is impressive and amazing!" **Meagan Preston - Chamber of Commerce - Nicola Valley**

"I am really excited about the future of tourism in the Merritt and the Nicola Valley area. A strong team are writing almost daily about the many opportunities and adventures we have to offer in this area. The opportunity to tell the world about our hidden gem by local residents is, to me, priceless." **Tony Luck - Merritt City Councilor**



"The bloggers have written about the geography, the sunny days, the community events, the attractions, the food, the art, the culture, and the outdoor adventures throughout the Nicola Valley. This new venture is a benefit to our community and will attract new visitors, new residents, and new businesses, and will inspire those of us who call the Nicola Valley home." **Courthouse Gallery**

"Your Experience Nicola Valley program has shined a new bright light on the City of Merritt BC through your sharing of positive stories and experiences. My business is grateful and I have been told from others they are just as appreciative." **Diane Lavoie - D & D Emporium**

The "eh Team"

The innovative marketing team of eh Canada Travel is led by the brothers, Greg and Colin Girard. The brothers, in 2018, just returned from a 10 year study researching and documenting small and rural Canadian communities.

Currently, they are developing the **Experience Community Program**, as well as, the fastest growing, privately operated, authentic content marketing adventure tourism website in Canada, **ehCanadaTravel.com**.

"Best 2021 Canadian Adventure Vacation Planner" Lux Life Hospitality Awards

1023

number of Canadian communities researched over a 10 year study



COLIN GIRARD

Colin worked at the management level in the hospitality industry until 1997. Colin is the initial founder of the eh Canada Travel program. Today, Colin oversees all development and technology projects and teams.



GREG GIRARD

Greg was an international marketing director until 2002. Today, Greg is the research and marketing arm of eh Canada Travel. He is also a public speaker, community consultant, trainer and was recently ranked 23rd in the world on the "Top 1000 Global Travel Bloggers" (Global Rise 2019).

ABOUT US

“Internet marketing entrepreneurs, innovators, leaders, community focused, reliable, and authentic. They are in the business of helping communities build up their tourism and travel industry skills.”

Randy Oliwa
Ucluelet BC City Councilor
Little Beach Resort Owner





What You Need To Know

- You control your brand and messaging on a national award-winning platform.
- You receive two real-time website platforms acting as one, interacting, creating new authentic content on a regular basis.
- Program is customizable for communities, regions and corporate community sponsors.
- Grant writers available to assist with funding (non profits only).
- Corporations, and big industry can acquire the program as a project supporting community.
- Local groups and small businesses can ban together to acquire program.
- Program pricing dependent on community or region size.

Contact Us

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Please feel free to contact any of these participating and supporting community stakeholders for further references:

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This is a **Tourism Nicola Valley** initiative and is not associated with Tourism Merritt.