Marketing Excellence (campaign or project budget up to $5,000) Award Finalist

Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association, The Backyard Tourist, Grande Prairie

Sometimes the best trips don't require much travel at all

"No other destination marketing organization that I know of in Alberta has their own TV series that promotes their region across Canada," says Emilia Hovorka, Executive Director, Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association.

The idea for *The Backyard Tourist*, a television show featuring local visitor attractions, events, heritage, dining and the natural beauty of the region, came from Grande Prairie Regional Tourism and the local cable station, Eastlink TV. The result was a series of 13 shows, with the hosting, writing, producing, filming and editing being done by the regional tourism association. Needless to say, this involved an intense learning curve.

"We ended up with a whole lot more than we anticipated," says Hovorka. "Sometimes it pays to be persistent and dedicated. We approached Eastlink to see if they were interested in a half-hour show and ended up with a series with a three-year run and was Eastlink's number-one rated video-on-demand across Canada."

The budget for the project over the last three years is a mere $1,500, which paid for travel to the locations. More than 300 volunteer-hours have gone into the shooting, hosting, producing, writing and editing and almost 100-hours of volunteer time from associate partners.

"This Alto nomination means great recognition for the association not only locally, but on a provincial level. It also demonstrates that you can still market effectively on small budgets," says Hovorka.

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Contact: Emilia Hovorka, Executive Director, Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association, 780-539-7688, info@gptourism.ca

Sponsored by Brewster Travel Canada, the Marketing Excellence (budget up to $5,000) Alto recognizes creative marketing campaigns and projects that encourage travel to, and within, Alberta with budgets up to $5,000.