



# City of Maple Ridge News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Tourism Forum Brings Regional Experts Together With Local Stakeholders**

**Maple Ridge, BC:** The City of Maple Ridge is hosting two Tourism Fora to bring regional experts on tourism to the community to share their experiences with local stakeholders and community members. The goal will be to create a conversation on how Maple Ridge can build on our awesome natural assets and support the amazing local entrepreneurs who have created businesses in the broad Tourism sector.

“As our Mayor has noted in presentations around the region, Maple Ridge won the nature lottery. There are few communities that have the diversity of natural settings that we have. Our initial goal is to engage our citizens and get feedback and suggestions on what our strengths are across the wide range of activities that are of interest to our citizens and visitors alike,” said Lino Siracusa, Manager of Economic Development for the City of Maple Ridge. These forums will provide our citizens an opportunity to engage with tourism experts and share their ideas on attractions and programs they would like to see in Maple Ridge.

The first session on Adventure Tourism will run on Monday, June 12 from 6:00 to 8:30 pm in the ACT Arts Centre Studio Theatre.. This broad category includes cycling, hiking walking, outdoor recreation and ways that we can leverage our local sports expertise to attract visitors.

The Moderator for the June 12 forum is Larissa Franklin, a member of Team Canada’s Softball program and a 2015 PanAm Games Gold Medalist. Larissa was also named as a ‘Home Town Hero’ in 2016.

The June 12 forum will feature presentations by Sam Waddington, speaking on the subject of Adventure Tourism. Sam is a Councillor for the City of Chilliwack, and owner of Mt. Waddington’s Outdoor which has a focus on customers who are into hiking and climbing. The forum will also feature Nic Meyer, a Director of the BC Cycling Coalition. Nic has been involved in an impressive

list of global cycle-touring trips along with off-road experience and fondo participation making him an excellent advisor on how cycling and tourism can be a great asset for our City. Sports tourism will also be a subject of discussion at this forum.

The second session, the Cultural Tourism forum, will run on Monday, June 19 from 6:00 to 8:30 pm in the Fraser Room at the Maple Ridge Public Library. In this forum participants will explore ways that our community can collaborate and connect with local experts to share the history of our first nations, community festivals, heritage and agri-tourism with the world.

Taryn Stephenson, who grew up in this community working side-by-side with her mother to found and operate 'Once Upon a T Leaf' a specialty retail operation located on 224 Street will moderate this forum. Taryn has carved out an impressive career in marketing and promotion in the broadcast industry in BC.

The June 19 session will feature a presentation by Will Harding, who will speak on the subject of Aboriginal Tourism connecting with the culture of our local Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations.

Allison Colthorp, Executive Director, Tourism Chilliwack who will talk about the growth of Agri-Tourism in the Fraser Valley and the continued evolution of the Circle Farm Tour. She will share how Maple Ridge can leverage agriculture and food production as a powerful part of a tourism brand. Donna Dixon, a successful event planner whose roots are well planted in the Fraser Valley, will speak to the power of community events including how designing and delivering niche events can provide an opportunity to generate additional visitors and revenue and create and enhance a positive image and reputation while contributing to our civic pride.

After the guest speakers have finished their presentations the audience will be invited to participate in group discussions to explore ways that the City of Maple Ridge can increase our regional and provincial profile and build on the expertise and assets that we have in our community to grow our tourism economy.

The forums are free and all members of the public are invited to attend and hear the presentations and provide their feedback. For more information on registering for the forum please contact Karen Hansen at 604-463-5221 or by email at [khansen@mapleridge.ca](mailto:khansen@mapleridge.ca).

If you would like more information about the City of Maple Ridge's Tourism program development please contact Lino Siracusa, Economic development Manager for the City of Maple Ridge at 604-463-5221 or by email at [lsiracusa@mapleridge.ca](mailto:lsiracusa@mapleridge.ca).

