

Creating Tourism Experiences In Haldimand

By Jillian Zynomirski
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HALDIMAND— Out of 10 municipalities in southwestern Ontario, Haldimand has been chosen as the successful applicant for a Tourism Experience Development program, geared at creating tourism experiences in the county.

Haldimand County Economic Development and Tourism division learned of the tourism opportunity in February. They created a proposal and video on why Haldimand deserves the opportunity and were selected as the successful candidate.

The County has assembled a committee that will work with a facilitator to develop tourism experiences in the county for the next six months.

"The goal is to engage businesses from Haldimand County and across the region to develop tourism experiences that are designed to engage visitors, set the stage for conversations, tap the senses, find the story and celebrate what is unique," said Lidy Romanuk, Acting Manager, Economic Development and Tourism, Haldimand County. "It's something where you can leave with that memory of

touching or tasting something. It can come from nature, cuisine or culture and it can involve traditions, people and places in the community."

The committee that will work with facilitator Celes Devar is comprised of Sheryl Sawyer from Mudcat Marathon, Graham Bacchiu from Windecker Road Films, Marilyn Havelka from Ruthven Park, Tauri Caputo from Grand Erie Business Centre, Joanne Wolnik from Ontario Southwest and Jane Anderson and Romanuk from Haldimand County Tourism.

"It's all about working with community partners and the community, providing some training to key people so that expertise stays in the community," said Romanuk.

The committee gathered last Tuesday for the first time and brainstormed potential experiential development within Haldimand County. Next, they will shorten the list to six potential experiences that can be developed in Haldimand County, all of which will generate revenue.

Devar will be coming from Manitoba to Haldimand mid-May to teach the committee cutting-edge tourism information, show them exactly

what a tourism experience looks like and what people are looking for.

Over the next several months, the committee will have experienced each of the six potential tourism experiences and will choose three to focus on.

At the final October workshop (Oct. 16-18), there will be one-on-one coaching from the community team and facilitator.

"At the end of the workshop we hope to have three experiences for 2018 that are ready to go, that are new tourism offerings in Haldimand County," said Romanuk.

Haldimand County will receive a significant amount of money for this project, said Romanuk. Funds will go towards the facilitator's coaching and mentoring, developing tourism experiences, the committee's pre-work and the workshop.

"I'm really hoping this will drive our operators and even new potential businesses to create some new opportunities," said Romanuk.

"It's really good timing for us because our tourism strategy speaks strongly to the opportunity to create more experiences within the county," said Romanuk.