

# Best Practice

## Tourism and Rebranding Campaign

### CONTACT

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### THE PRACTICE

#### *What was the issue?*

The need to position Eastend as a must-see Saskatchewan destination, to attract visitors and generate new revenue streams to support local businesses.

#### *What was the project?*

The Councils of the Town of Eastend and RM of White Valley No. 49 decided to take a new direction with regards to Tourism and Economic Development issues.

A Tourism Advisory Group was formed with representatives of Local Government, Business, Banking, Education and the Arts. The Group is led by a town employee focused on Economic Development and Tourism. The Group's recommendations are presented to the Councils for approval and funding.

The councils approved the development of a Tourism and rebranding campaign around the theme "Discover a Sanctuary for all your senses... Discover Eastend, Saskatchewan" that included the creation of a new website, a new town brochure, a Facebook page, as well as print and radio advertising and online communications, all under the new theme.

In addition to many other activities which you will read about below, Eastend was promoted with over 8,000 brochures distributed across Saskatchewan and throughout tourism traffic areas in Manitoba, Alberta, BC, northern Montana and central Mexico.

### THE PROCESS

The Councils of the Town of Eastend and RM of *White Valley* No. 49 analyzed the recommendations, including initiatives, cost analysis, time frames, and supported the new direction and recommendations of the Tourism Advisory Group.

Yes. The Eastend Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Town to develop and print the new Town Brochure, and contributed 50% of the costs for re-branded print advertisements.

Also involved is a diverse number of Community Groups. They bring ideas and suggestions from their Groups and present them to the Advisory Group, who collects and integrates many of the ideas into the Towns event planning process.

Resources included a combination of town staff, local groups and volunteers. The Town employee in charge of Tourism and Economic Development, developed and presented the Marketing and rebranding strategy while tapping into expertise of local volunteers that had a background in Tourism and Marketing. After the brochure concept was developed and approved, resources for graphic design were donated. All photographs for the brochure are from local photographers.

Eastend Chamber of Commerce contributed to brochure printing and distribution costs.

A new website was developed, and Town volunteers set it up, along with a Facebook page. Printed advertising was also designed and all work was created to fit visually and thematically into the new brand's look and feel.

The Town used free online advertising and social media to promote the new positioning and themed events.

Development of the entire campaign started with a detailed analysis of the competitive tourism materials available to prospective visitors. The Tourism Advisory Group found that most marketing for alternative small-town destinations looked very similar. The materials were largely formulaic, with often over-cluttered ads focused on typical listings of town's amenities, its businesses, and its conventional 'attractions'.

In order to achieve its goals of revitalizing its tourism offering, attracting more people to the community, and generating tangible revenues, **Eastend needed to stand apart** from other small towns and be seen as a unique, fresh and appealing destination choice.

With that in mind, strategic analysis looked at the motivations for people taking holidays, and the emotional drivers behind their destination choices. In summary, in today's overwhelming media environment, with social and political upheaval seemingly everywhere, people had a sense of unease and a genuine desire to find an escape. A refuge. After all that's what holidays should be about... a refreshing escape from the day-to-day pressures and stresses that affect us all in our everyday lives. People automatically seek a **sanctuary** in times of stress.

So, the creative strategy was born. Instead of delivering a rational offering to visitors by telling them about the hours of your pool or golf course and the prices of your restaurants, create an **emotional connection** by offering them a **sanctuary**. A place where they could **discover new experiences** that would appeal to a wide range of audiences. It is a well-known fact that *the fullest personal experience involves a person's use of all five senses, the faculties of sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch*.

The goal of differentiating Eastend from every other small town started with the creative approach.

The creative execution focused on the five senses, by inviting visitors to discover how each of their senses could be awakened on their visit to our sanctuary. To do this there were 3 key creative aspects to consider.

**i) Language.** The use of language was key. Not only *what* the language said, but *how* it was said. The voice of the town, if you will. So instead of talking about typical services and attractions, the reader was invited to discover experiences that evoke specific emotions. What will you... Hear? See? Smell? Taste? Touch? The voice was cryptic and evocative, with words designed to take the reader on a sense-based exploration of some of the experiences they might discover on their visit

**ii) Visual treatment.** The overarching design of the material was created to evoke a sense of peacefulness and wonder, which focused on the beauty and uniqueness of the environment in and around Eastend. Pictures of Teepee stones, a newborn calf, two old-time dancers, a local band, and many others drew the viewer into the experience.

This was coupled with stunning shots of the natural environment, like the intensity of storms forming across the prairie, or river ice shelves cracking open in spring.

iii) **Format:** To differentiate from traditional norms, a large landscape format was created, conducive to showcasing the wonders of the Town in all its glory. Since the format was different from all other towns, Eastend's material could not be 'slotted in' with the traditional leaflets and brochures found in visitor centres. As a result, in and of itself the Eastend brochure stood apart

The key to success then, was to create an emotional connection between the town and prospective visitors. Hence a new branding proposition was created and implemented across the board on all publicity or advertising.

**"Discover a *Sanctuary* for all your senses...**

**Discover *Eastend*, Saskatchewan"**

## THE RESULTS

The new campaign revitalised the Town with a refreshing new single-minded message, and a huge boost in tourist traffic. Since the development of the new campaign, the Town of Eastend has been awarded:

- Winners of Communities in Bloom 2017 for Provincial Population Category 500-1000; awarded Special Mention for Community Theme "Discover a sanctuary for all your senses... Discover Eastend, Saskatchewan"
- Finalist for the Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence for 2017, in the category 2017 Gil Carduner Marketing. Award for our "Discover a Sanctuary for all your senses..... Discover Eastend, Saskatchewan" campaign.
- Winners of "SEDA Marketing Innovation Award 2018 –Under 10,000 Population" for our campaign Discover a Sanctuary for all your senses...Discover Eastend Saskatchewan. The award was presented during SEDA's Intersections for Growth Conference on May 2, 2018
- CJSN Radio featured a series "Discover Eastend, a Sanctuary for all your senses!" one minute a week over peak summer period

Eastend's name recognition has increased dramatically.

- CTV's national morning show "the Social" travel section featured Eastend in their "Canadian hot spots you should probably consider visiting" as selected by Heather Greenwood-Davis, Editor, National Geographic Traveler magazine. Saskatchewan destinations: Saskatoon, 11sec of exposure, Lake Diefenbaker 14sec, Eastend 30sec of 60sec National slot. Earned media value is considerable. A 30sec national TV spot was recently valued at \$112,000 (Nielsen).
- MSM.com Travel selected Eastend one of 20 global "Up and Coming Destinations Every Canadian Needs on Their Radar in 2018" beside well-established International destinations in Australia, Japan, Peru, Mexico and globally.

**Tens of thousands of dollars' worth of free media was generated**, and a record number of visitors and tourism dollars were attracted to our little town.

By working closely with Community Groups and creating new events, we were able to attract more visitors:

For example, Wheels of Wonder Weekend: Bikes, Trains and Automobiles: 3 standalone events were packaged together and held over the same weekend...

- Canadian Coasters - 100 classic vehicles with close to 200 visitors. A special tour was designed for them, and community groups prepared a supper and breakfast for them where locals and other visitors were invited to come, mingle and view the cars.
- North American Railcar Operators Association: over 30 classic railcars stopped by the Town and attracted railway enthusiasts
- Rally in the Valley: a bikers rally over 200 bikers came to town for a weekend of music and games.

Besides the free press coverage for the event, the Canadian Coast to Coast Classic Car revenues to the town were conservatively estimated at well over \$10,000, including significant cash intakes at the Campground, T.rex Centre, Museum, and the Observatory, along with record queues for groceries, restaurant meals and gas.

For Dino Days, our more important festival, 5 community groups worked together to develop a new event offering, the Taste of Eastend, and created a hugely popular annual taste experience for residents and visitors.

Of course, the new campaign includes Scotty the T.rex, Saskatchewan's Official Provincial Fossil. Over the last few years there has been a constant increase in visitors, and this year just the T.rex alone received a record breaking 10,000 visitors.

Evaluation of the project is ongoing. The Tourism Advisory Group evaluates based on results and updates or makes adjustments accordingly.

Formal and informal evaluations are ongoing.

According to formal Royal Saskatchewan Museum data, recorded for Eastend, there has been a 28% increase in visitations to the town and the T-Rex Centre.

Evaluating the Wheels of Wonder Weekend alone, revenues to the town were conservatively estimated at well over \$10,000, including significant cash intakes at the Campground, T.rex Centre, Museum, and the Observatory, along with record ques for groceries, restaurant meals and gas.

Evaluation also looked at Eastend's free 'earned' media exposure at three levels:

### **1. Local / Provincial exposure**

Eastend has been featured on CBC Radio's Blue Sky, as well as on Saskatchewan Weekend, a province wide weekend radio program, on a special show looking at the best place to live on the Prairies.

Communities in Bloom 2017 announced Eastend as Winner for Provincial Population Category 500-1000 and awarded Special Mention for Community Theme "Discover a sanctuary for all your senses... Discover Eastend, Saskatchewan"

CJSN Radio aired a series "Discover Eastend, a Sanctuary for all your senses!" one minute a week over the peak summer period.

### **1. National exposure**

CTV's national morning show "the Social" travel section featured Eastend in their "Canadian hot spots you should probably consider visiting" as selected by Heather Greenwood-Davis, Editor, National Geographic Traveler magazine. Saskatchewan destinations were: Saskatoon, 11sec of exposure, Lake Diefenbaker 14sec, Eastend 30sec of 60sec National slot. Earned media value is considerable. A 30sec national TV spot was recently valued at \$112,000 (Nielsen).

### **2. International exposure**

Breakthrough. MSM.com listed Eastend as one of 20 “Up and Coming Destinations Every Canadian Needs on Their Radar in 2018” beside well-established International destinations in Australia, Japan, Peru, Mexico and globally. Distribution of Town brochure across Northern Montana and Central Mexico raised awareness of both Town and Province. Eastend’s website / facebook pages attract viewers in USA, Asia, Europe and Latin America.

Increased exposure and recognition also resulted in regional events like the SCWC7 ‘Geocaching Park Tour’ inviting Eastend to participate, offering a digital geocaching event, where entrants explored Eastend to discover unique treasures.

Like many small rural communities, we face the challenge of keeping our community alive, fresh and attractive to visitors. This will keep our local businesses thriving. We need to attract people who want to invest in our community, and tourists who want to come and spend money locally.

The main challenge is to work within a very modest budget. Even with this challenge we managed to generate free earned media worth tens of thousands of dollars.

Imagine...our small town of just 503 people, with almost no marketing budget, was one of the three Saskatchewan Tourism Award marketing finalists, along-side two well established and well-funded organizations : the Saskatchewan Roughriders Football Club Inc. and the Wanuskewin Heritage Park.

Gaining national and international exposure was a challenge. Being featured on CTV National television, with recommendations by National Geographic, and ranking among the world’s top 20 most interesting destinations on MSN.com travel, are unprecedented. This kind of promotional exposure contributes not only to the attraction of Eastend but to the overall appeal of Saskatchewan.

Eastend is living proof that even with a small population, limited budgets, and relative geographic isolation, small communities can give visitors irresistible reasons to help make their town a centre of growth for Saskatchewan Tourism.

And we have only just begun!

## LESSONS LEARNED

**With passion, commitment, and hard work...you CAN create something from almost nothing!**

- Small towns don’t need to be limited by marketing budgets to promote their towns.
- Tap into the expertise of your residents and volunteers.
- Every single resident that volunteers in Community Groups and Organizations help make possible all of the above-mentioned achievements.
- Work more closely with community groups to promote events around a specific theme, combining some of them into one single bigger event. e.g. the Wheels of Wonder Weekend, where 3 events that would usually standalone became one big event that got more attention, attracting more visitors and media coverage, and more revenue to the town and the RM.
- Create an emotional connection with your target audience, not a rational one.
- Use social media and free online advertising to reach a wider audience and promote your message
- The biggest capital of any town is their volunteers! When every resident, including councillors are volunteers and serve on Community Boards and groups chances of succeeding increase.