



2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: Partnerships, Innovation and Building a Green Economy

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent, Alberta

Country: Canada

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Position: Executive Director

Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Islands & Seaside
- Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
- Post COVID -19 recovery
- One of the 17 SDGs* *(if yes, which one)* Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices [here](#)



DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent represents a Canadian portion of the transboundary Crown of the Continent, centered on Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park and the surrounding landscapes and communities in Alberta, British Columbia, and Montana. The key economic sectors in Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent are tourism, agriculture (farming and ranching) and renewable energy and infrastructure. The success in all these sectors is dependent upon a strong connection to the landscape, sustainability of resources and respect for the values and culture of the region. The region embraces an approach to “geotourism” which celebrates the distinctive geographical character of a place, the international, national, and provincial parks, conservation areas, and designated UNESCO sites.

The overarching challenge is to shape economic opportunities and visitor experiences consistent with regional strengths and in accordance with geotourism principles of stewardship, innovation, and sustainability.

UN SDGs

UN SDG Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent is the birthplace of the wind industry in Canada; proactive initiatives served to establish the first windfarm in the nation in 1993.

UN SDG Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Building upon clean energy resources, the Peaks to Prairies Electric Vehicle Charging Station Network goes the next step, encouraging early adoption of new technology.

UN SDG Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

There is not a major city within the region, and the sustainability of rural communities requires special attention. Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent helps communities to understand their strengths and develop opportunities and sustainable business practices in the key sectors that are built upon our natural resources.

Key sector issues and initiatives

1) Sustainable Tourism

The Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent’s tourism attractions, destinations and communities, including First Nation Reserves and Hutterite Colonies, are well-positioned to collaborate on a local level, to share knowledge, to develop best practices, manage risks and learn from the Covid-19 experience and implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In so doing, they are supported by federal and provincial policies, tourism polices and



guidelines, and diverse public and private funding.

Coordinated responses to Covid-19 are supported by the Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent, and the communities and organizations that contribute to manage the destination sustainability. Covid-19 challenges also bring opportunities to build the capacity of local tourism.

Geotourism and outdoor recreation continue to be a focus for the destination, and the Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council collaborates to promote sustainable business practices, to steward transboundary landscapes between Alberta and British Columbia in Canada, and Montana in the United States. This greater transboundary region continues to create experiences to celebrate the history, culture, and character of the Crown of the Continent.

2) Sustainable Energy and Infrastructure

In addition to being an established wind energy resource, the Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent receives more hours of sunshine than anywhere in Canada, setting the stage for innovation in solar technology. The Southern Alberta Alternative Energy Partnership (SAAEP), a multi-regional initiative formed in 2007, serves to educate communities, identify opportunities, support early adoption of clean technology.

The tourism aspect to energy production lies in the fascination with the technology: post-secondary institutions bring students to the region to learn about clean technology; small groups of visitors can access personal tours of a wind farm. The Peaks to Prairies Electric Vehicle Charging Station Network is the largest network of its kind in Alberta and attracts EV drivers to experience the region.

3) Sustainable Agriculture: Farming and Ranching and Pride in Local Products

In this agricultural region, it is essential to understand world and local markets, plant protein opportunities, precision farming and soil health. Covid-19 raises attention to vulnerability of food supply chains and the importance of safe, sustainable food production. Hutterite communities are particularly known for the high quality of their agricultural products which are prized at local farmers markets. The Energizing Agricultural Transformation (EAT) Resource Roundtable initiative brings together farmers, ranchers, and all businesses that link in the supply chain including suppliers, producers, distributors, and consumers. EAT is a forum to guide research, share knowledge on sustainability, diversification, technology, and innovative practices.

As with renewable energy, agricultural-tourism experiences are important in the region. Farm and ranch vacations offer authentic western experiences. Regional hotels, restaurants, bed and breakfast establishments offer local and artisanal food experiences for residents and visitors

Methods, steps and tools applied



Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent is proactively at the forefront in recognizing and adapting to the new economic and social challenges posed by Covid-19, while continuing to address multiple UN SDGs.

1. Collaboration

Collaboration has become more integrated, vertically and horizontally, in response to Covid-19. Federal, provincial, regional and local initiatives are designed to most fully engage the public, to understand and address economic policy, health guidelines and regulations to assist Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent and its businesses, individuals, and residents in adjusting to Covid-19. Canada and Alberta have been more guided by science and health expertise than the neighbouring United States, which has far has minimized health impacts of Covid-19 in the region. There is access to economic and financial support at sectoral level (i.e., agriculture, energy, tourism) to promote local and provincial opportunities as international and even Canadian travel has been disrupted. [See references for additional information]

Considering UN SD Goals 7, 9 and 11, successful initiatives are based on aligned efforts of relevant stakeholders who see the value of sustained commitment. For example, the Peaks to Prairies Electric Vehicle Charging Station Network initiative represents over 4 years of planning that grew to include 40 rural communities and 3 cities engaged in designing and installing an EV charging station network to encourage early adoption of clean technology and facilitate EV travel throughout the regions. Partner resources were matched by 3 levels of government and industry to create a \$2.16M project; 20 high capacity installations between 39 rural communities, 3 cities and 1,400km of highway The network connects Alberta and British Columbia in Canada, and there are plans are to extend the loop into Montana in the United States.

The Energizing Agricultural Transformation (EAT) initiative identified regional experts and business leaders to meet as a Resource Roundtable, creating cross-pollination of knowledge, creating new perspectives and ideas regarding possibilities and sustainability of the regions. Technology that supports innovation and precision-farming requires learning, knowledge, and data.

2. Communication:

Continued engagement and participation to enhance development across all three sectors, particularly considering Covid-19, demands tireless communication efforts. Careful planning and understanding must occur at the local, regional, provincial, and federal levels to meet economic, social, ecological and technical requirements and operational commitments.

3. Inspiration:

Success comes from embracing opportunities in the context of challenges. There is continued focus on Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent brand development, regional promotion, and celebration, particularly given the current shift in tourism from international to inter-provincial and intra-provincial

4. Education:

Across all sectors, there is increasing community engagement, which serves to build capacity



for communities and businesses to identify gaps and see opportunities. In these times of Covid-19 these events have had to occur remotely, via web meetings or telephone. The upside is that the new familiarity with on-line communication and internet-based learning will offer ongoing efficiencies in sharing knowledge during and post-Covid-19.

5. Calculation:

“What gets measured gets managed.” Research and data collection support informed decision-making. Tools and sources used to gather data include both primary and secondary sources: surveys, meetings, workshops, newsletters, social media, webinars, government and industry resources and data banks.

Examples of results:

- Economic Impact of Renewable Energy Development report makes a business case for communities to support new technology. Currently approved projects (6 solar, 3 wind) represent an estimated \$1.56B of new investment. [Link provided in references]

- Peaks to Prairies Electric Vehicle Charging Stations are networked, creating ability to gather real-time usage data, calculate emissions reduction and cost savings, manage customer experience and maintenance. Some measures for Q3 and Q4 2019 indicate a 27% increase in use; 12,025 kWh energy consumed; 4,999 litres gasoline avoided; 11,500 kgCO₂e avoided. [Link provided in references]

The network has generated some pre-COVID data, so the stations will offer insight as travel resumes in the upcoming months.

Key success factors

The economy of the Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent is tied to history, and culture and landscapes that support the visitor economy, farming, ranching, and sustainable energy development (wind and solar). Social, economic, and environmental aspirations are in harmony with the natural attributes and character of the region.

Success factors have come from ability to:

1. Engage communities and stakeholders:

There is no shortcut for doing this; identify community and industry leaders, be deliberate, persistent and identify common goals and strategies. Careful planning and community engagement are essential to building regional initiatives that are in harmony with the culture and values of the communities. Covid-19 response has benefitted from this foundation of collaboration, making response a more unified effort with (currently) very successful low-incidence outcomes. Notably, this is not taken for granted and initiatives continue to command attention.

2. Build on existing strengths:

The success of the economy of the Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent is its natural attributes and the people who value them. Stunning landscapes offer the setting for three UNESCO heritage sites, an international and national park, multiple provincial parks and conservation regions, a biosphere reserve, First Nation Reserves and Hutterite Colonies. A focus on sustainability, comes from the residents who value the culture and landscapes and



work tirelessly to enhance and celebrate those assets.

3. Create a shared vision:

The success of projects, across all sectors, grows from initial steps to consult with stakeholders, hold information workshops and educate our communities and businesses to understand the technology and the opportunities. There is no shortcut to this process; allow enough time to build relationships and get excited about the possibilities. For example, Peaks to Prairies started with one workshop, got local community leaders excited and knowledgeable. As they shared that knowledge more stakeholders gained understanding, enthusiasm, and commitment

Lessons learned

The essential lessons learned are multiple and briefly reiterated below with examples.

1. Partnerships:

As one of our stakeholders observed, “All of us are smarter than just one of us.” Identify community and industry leaders, be deliberate, persistent and identify common goals and strategies. The transboundary Crown of the Continent Geotourism Council is a key strategic partnership to supporting sustainable business practices and creating awareness of this important geotourism destination. The Geotourism mapguide for the Crown of the Continent was developed in partnership with National Geographic. Since 2007, 1.2 million map guides have been distributed.

2. Planning:

Municipal leaders and stakeholders rely on research and numbers to demonstrate a return on investment, in both dollars and community benefit. The feasibility of a project demands understanding and defining the logistics, the process, and the steps to deployment.

3. Innovation

Innovation takes us into uncharted territory. It is important to be excited when problems arise, as that is the opportunity to make improvements, to do things differently and better! Even a challenging situation, as is Covid-19, can prove to offer opportunities to introduce Alberta and Canadian tourists to the beauty and parks and protected areas within the Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent.

Results, achievements and recognitions



Alberta SouthWest Crown of the Continent region is pleased to have been named to the Green Destinations 2018 and 2019 Top 100 Sustainable Global Destinations and 2020 Top 3 Best of the Americas.

Since 2009 AlbertaSW has received over 30 provincial, national, and international recognitions: 2014: Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC) Trophy for best national project and 2017: International Economic Development Council (IEDC) Organizational Leadership Award

Multi-Regional Partnership Awards of Excellence

2016: Investment Attraction Project Award – Southern Alberta Investment and Trade Initiative
2016: 13 WAYS Performance Review for Ambitious Communities
2015: SouthWest Invest - Bringing Investment Home
2014: Alex Metcalf Award: SouthWest Connect Wi-Fi Network
2014: Advertising Award: Regional Information Display
2014: Social Media Award: GPS-guided driving tours and app
2013: Project Award - Regional Business License
2013: Economic Developer of the Year: Bev Thornton
2012: Regional Marketing Campaign Award: Web Launch and Video Contest
2012: Creative Innovations Award: AlbertaSW in Four Minutes Video
2012: Use of Social Media Award: Web launch and Media Campaign
2009 Marketing Alberta Award: Reel Adventures Alberta Movie Maps

Regional Awards

Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC) Marketing Canada Awards
2014: Contender, EDAC Cup; one of three finalists for outstanding project
On-line Outreach Award: SouthWest Connect Regional Wi-Fi Network
2013: Advertising Award: Regional information display
On-line Outreach Award: GPS-guided Driving Tours and App
2012: Winner, EDAC Cup; outstanding national project
Media Campaign Award: My Alberta SouthWest
Website Award: www.albertasouthwest.com
On-line Outreach Award: My Alberta SouthWest Video Contest
Alberta Tourism ALTO Awards
2014: Finalist: Tourism Partnership of the Year
2012: Finalist: Tourism Communities of the Year
2009: Finalist: Marketing Partnership- Reel Adventures Alberta Movie Maps

Additional references



Federal Government Covid-19 Health and Socio-Economic Response and Support

Government of Canada's Covid-19 Economic Response Plan

<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

For tourism, deferring payments on commercial leases and licenses of occupation in Waterton Lakes National Park: Working with tourism operators in national parks, historic sites, and marine conservation areas to defer payments on commercial leases and licences of occupation without interest until September 1, 2020. In addition, waive up to 75 percent of eligible commercial rents for the months of April, May and June 2020 or equivalent amounts of annual rents.

Additional federal support for tourism business

- Avoiding layoffs, rehiring employees and creating new jobs
- Taxes and tariffs
- Financial support, loans and access to credit
- Indigenous businesses
- Support for self-employed individuals

Alberta Provincial Government Covid-19 Response

Covid-19 Information for Albertans

<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

Alberta's Recovery Plan

<https://www.alberta.ca/recovery-plan.aspx>

Alberta Biz Connect

<https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>

Travel Alberta – Covid-19 Updates for Industry

<https://industry.travelalberta.com/news-media/covid-19>

Multi-regional level - Foothills Business Recovery Task Force

www.fbrt.ca

Community Level (example)

<https://www.pincherchamber.ca/covid-19>

Conservation and Tourism

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Writing-on-Stone / Áísínai'pi World Heritage Site

<https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/south/writing-on-stone-pp/>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1597>

<https://www.travelalberta.com/ca/places-to-go/provincial-parks/writing-on-stone-provincial-park/>



Head-Smashed- In Buffalo Jump World Heritage Site

<https://headsmashedin.ca/>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/158>

<https://www.travelalberta.com/ca/listings/head-smashed-in-buffalo-jump-world-heritage-site-1060/>

Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park World Heritage Site

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/spm-whs/sites-canada/sec021>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/354/video>

Crown of the Continent Mini-documentary (8 minutes; YouTube) tells the story of formation of the world's first international peace park, Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park in 1932,

<https://crownofthecontinent.net/entries/crown-of-the-continent-ksp-documentary/5454828c-a61e-4d7a-9112-1a896e3bc3ab>

First International Dark Sky Designation

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/voyage-travel/experiences/ciel-sky>

Waterton Lakes National Park

<https://mywaterton.ca/>

<https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/ab/waterton/>

Crown of the Continent Transboundary Geotourism Council

www.crownofthecontinent.net

<https://www.sustainabletourismmlab.com/geotourismprinciples.htm#:~:text=reports%20and%20presentations->

[,Geotourism%20Principles,foster%20enhancement%20of%20sustainable%20destinations.](https://www.sustainabletourismmlab.com/geotourismprinciples.htm#:~:text=reports%20and%20presentations-)

Waterton Biosphere Reserve

<https://www.watertonbiosphere.com/>

Castle Park and Wilderness Area

<https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/south/castle-pp/>

Alberta SouthWest Regional Economic Development Alliance

www.albertasouthwest.com

Directory of summer events and attractions

www.myalbertasouthwest.com

First Nations

The Blackfoot Confederacy is the Regional Managing Organizations for the Blackfoot Confederacy

Nations of the Kainai-Blood Tribe, Siksika Nation, Peigan-Piikani and Aamskapi Pikuni

<http://blackfootconfederacy.ca/>

Kainai-Blood Tribe

<https://bloodtribe.org/>

Piikani Nation

<https://piikanination.wixsite.com/piikanination>



Siksika Nation

<http://siksikanation.com/wp/>

Other Industry Resources and Reports

Renewable energy Economic Impact of current projects in southern Alberta

<https://saaep.ca/2019-regional-economic-impact-report/www.saaep.ca>

Agricultural Transformation Research Report

<https://www.albertasouthwest.com/about/our-projects/current-projects/energizing-agricultural-transformation/>

Peaks to Prairies Project and PDF of Update Report

<https://www.albertasouthwest.com/about/our-projects/current-projects/peaks-to-prairies-ev-charging-network/>

