

For Immediate Release: October 27, 2021

## **NEW PROGRAM AIMS TO “SPARK” INNOVATIVE TOURISM IDEAS IN THE CARIBOO CHILCOTIN COAST**

Secwépemc Territory (Williams Lake, BC) – A tourism development program from Destination BC, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, Community Futures, and the Tourism Innovation Lab aimed at sparking and supporting innovative new tourism ideas in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region, was announced today.

### **View official program announcement video:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzIQ0DyMej4&feature=emb\\_imp\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzIQ0DyMej4&feature=emb_imp_woyt)

The “Spark” Mentorships & Grants Program is designed to help tourism entrepreneurs, small businesses and non-profit organizations overcome challenges and barriers often experienced in bringing new tourism products to life. Previous program participants in other jurisdictions have included water-based ecotours, agritourism initiatives, Indigenous tourism programs, wine and culinary workshops, interactive walking tours, virtual experiences, aerial adventures, winter glamping retreats, nature orientated vacation packages, and more.

The goal is to find, foster and support innovative tourism ideas, experiences and partnerships that will enhance current offerings, address gaps or challenges, motivate travel and longer stays, and increase year-round visits along the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast.

The program works by matching selected applicants with a tourism mentor, providing a \$3,000 seed grant as well as additional partner support to help develop new tourism experiences. Applications are encouraged from entrepreneurs, small businesses, and non-profit organizations in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast, from October 27 to December 3, 2021. Following a review process, five finalists will be invited to a virtual Pitch Session where three winners will be selected.

The Cariboo Chilcotin Coast “Spark” Program is presented by Destination BC and the Tourism Innovation Lab, in collaboration with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association and Community Futures.

The “Spark” Program was first launched in Ontario in 2018 by the Tourism Innovation Lab and is expanding throughout British Columbia, supported by Destination BC. For more information on the “Spark” Mentorships & Grants Program and upcoming Info Sessions visit:

<https://www.tourisminnovation.ca/cariboochilcotincoast.html>

### **QUOTES**

#### **Amy Thacker, CEO, Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association**

"Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism is committed to supporting tourism innovation and the development of new and improved tourism experiences in the region, building collaborative

partnerships and piloting programs, such as the “Spark” Mentorships & Grants Program. We are pleased to be partnering with our regional Community Futures, Destination BC and the Tourism Innovation Lab to launch a new pilot program targeted at a diverse range of tourism entrepreneurs and operators, non-for-profit organizations and Indigenous Nations, interested in creating, building and bringing a new tourism experience to market. With this program we hope to encourage your visionary, creative mind to develop something unique.”

**Richard Porges, President & CEO, Destination BC**

“The Spark program is an exciting partnership that will drive innovation in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast and help address growing traveller appetite for new experiences. We are delighted to work with Tourism Innovation Lab, the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, and other local partners to develop new tourism offerings for the area, adding value to BC communities and increasing our province’s competitiveness.”

**Justin Lafontaine, Program Lead, Tourism Innovation Lab**

“We are very excited to be bringing our third “Spark” Program in British Columbia to the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast. The “Spark” Program is focused on early-stage tourism development and can make a big difference in bringing a new tourism idea to life. We look forward to welcoming new tourism ideas that will enhance the area’s offerings and drive innovation.”

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**Social Media:**

Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association

Twitter: [@CarChiCoa](https://twitter.com/CarChiCoa)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cariboo-chilcotin-coast-tourism-association>

Destination BC

Twitter: [@DestinationBC](https://twitter.com/DestinationBC)

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/destinationbritishcolumbia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/destinationbritishcolumbia)

Tourism Innovation Lab

Facebook/Instagram: @tourisminnovationcanada

Twitter: @TourInnovation

## **About:**

### About Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association:

CCCTA is a non-profit, stakeholder-based Regional Destination Management Organization that leads tourism in development and marketing in conjunction with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture & Sport, Destination British Columbia, Destination Canada and industry partners in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Region to help foster the responsible growth of tourism and the visitor economy. <https://landwithoutlimits.com/>

### About Destination BC:

Destination British Columbia (Destination BC) is a provincially funded, industry-led Crown corporation that supports a strong and competitive future for BC's tourism industry through a combination of global marketing, destination development, industry learning, cooperative community-based programs, and visitor servicing. Destination BC's programs help to improve the visitor experience, support businesses and communities across the province, and strengthen BC's worldwide reputation as a destination of choice. For more information about Destination BC's programs and services, please visit: <http://www.DestinationBC.ca/>

### About the Tourism Innovation Lab:

The Tourism Innovation Lab is a non-profit initiative created to find, foster and support new tourism ideas, experiences and partnerships, to cultivate and propel collaborations between the tourism and tech sectors, and to build a community of tourism innovators, idea makers and entrepreneurs. Launched in Ontario in 2018, the Lab and its "Spark" Mentorships & Grants Program are expanding to British Columbia. The Tourism Innovation Lab is a program of Hackforge and is based at the University of Windsor-EPICentre. For more information, please visit: <https://www.tourisminnovation.ca>