

# Wainwright marketing gets Twisted



Photo: Kelly Clemmer

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The Wainwright Economic Development Board (WEDB) has tasked Calgary's Twist Marketing with strategizing an advertising campaign and brand development of Wainwright in order to draw investment and more people to the area.

In exchange for \$9,300 from the EDB budget and the Town of Wainwright, Twist will provide the Board with an advertising plan which will identify key target audiences and markets, a tagline and sample ads with this in mind, and a "Strategy Workshop" with stakeholders.

"We've never really been overly good at marketing ourselves," said Economic Development Officer Carley Herbert. "It's being progressive. It's part of economic development, to keep us growing and becoming the hub for the area that we're already becoming, but just enhancing that."

On Tuesday June 18, Chris Fields of Twist presented the strategy workshop to the EDB as well as Town of Wainwright council members and Wainwright

CAO Ray Poulin.

The group brainstormed on several ideas and questions about Wainwright, the results of which Twist will develop into its advertising plan.

The plan will be presented back to the WEDB sometime in July.

At the workshop, Field identified the need for municipalities to simplify advertising messages, and to move away from typical, small-town "safe" and "quality-of-life" based ads, in favour of focusing on a few highlights and selling the emotion or experiences attached to them.

He cited the risks that towns such as Lillooet and Elkford took with advertising that targeted specific groups with edgy and successful campaigns.

"The more brave you are, the less consensus there is, but you've got to be more brave in a marketplace to get noticed," Fields said.

Also, the internet and social media play a role in a community's image to potential markets, he says.

"People are forming their own impression of you whether you like it or not. The whole point of this is to inject yourself in the conversation with a point to be made," Field said.

A typical small town marketing downfall is to promote close to all visitor-related business in its tourism packages, Fields said.

What Twist proposes in contrast is more targeted advertising, which will translate into more dollars spent elsewhere in the community.

"What you are known for outside of Wainwright will be three, maybe five things," he said. "The challenge of economic development is to make sure you're talking about those winners,

knowing that all those other boats will rise to the top. You don't want to be known for everything or you're nothing. You have to make some choices."

Workshop attendees reflected on questions such as what makes Wainwright unique, what are its economic weaknesses, what entrepreneurial ventures would you suggest, and how would you describe a typical Wainwright resident?

A gap in adequate health care was discussed at length, along with expanded trail systems, unified business sectors and more manufacturing.

A desire for more space for the arts, alternative health, local produce and a new hospital were also expressed.

One thing that all could agree on was that Wainwright is a safe, welcoming, generous place for families. This, however, is not necessarily an effective image to portray to prospective incomers, said Fields.

"In general, what we tend to do in communities is we play a bit safe; we try to appeal to everybody, and we tend to lose our voice in a really crowded marketplace," he said. "Even for the most rural community today, we live in a global community, where you can't sit around and rest idly by because the world will pass you by."

With Twist, Field has developed marketing strategies for over 55 communities similar to Wainwright.



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(Above left) Chris Fields of Twist Marketing gave a "Strategy Workshop" to Wainwright's Economic Development Board June 18; (above) Councillor Vic Callaghan and Tony Norris.



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