

For Immediate Release

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**Low-resolution photo attached. Hi-res photos available upon request.*

Okanagan College Wins 2018/19 Regional Tourism Student Case Competition

Osoyoos, BC – A student team from Okanagan College School of Business was crowned the winner of the regional Winning Pitch competition at the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association Summit today.

[The Winning Pitch](#), organized and presented by go2HR, BC's tourism human resource association, is a post-secondary student case competition. This year, student teams had to develop a new product or service that supports the development of accessible tourism opportunities in the Thompson Okanagan region.

Four teams from Thompson Rivers University and Okanagan College had 10 minutes each to present their high-level business concept to an industry judging panel, consisting of:

- Sonja Gaudet, Accessibility Specialist, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
- Joanne Muirhead, Owner/Operator, Jojo's Café
- Diana Stirling, Owner, LocoLanding Adventure Park & "the Peach" Ice Cream Shop
- Valeria Tait, General Manager & Winemaker, Bench 1775

The Okanagan College team, made up of students Bryan Cresswell, Celina Matte, Emily Pilon, and Zackery Plaxton, took home first place with their proposal of "AccessFest".

"They hit the mark on something that we have been wanting to do in our region," said judge Sonja Gaudet. Another judge, Diana Stirling, commented that the winning team's "approach was innovative, the idea is applicable, and there are scalability opportunities."

The winning team will represent the region at the provincial finals, which will take place at the 2019 BC Tourism Industry Conference in Vancouver. The Winning Pitch competition is sponsored by Partners in Tourism Society and Destination British Columbia. The Thompson Okanagan regional competition is supported by the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association.

This year, several local tourism businesses stepped up to provide mentorship for the student teams. Thanks to the following mentors for volunteering their time and expertise:

- Sarah Ballantyne, Assistant General Manager, Comfort Suites Kelowna
- Terri Hadwin, Owner/Consultant, Intrinsic Destinations
- Ian Renton, General Manager, The Rise Golf Course
- Vivek Sharma, General Manager, Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre

About go2HR

go2HR is BC's tourism human resource association, responsible for coordinating the BC Tourism Labour Market Strategy. go2HR provides tourism employers with resources in the area of recruitment and retention, as well as training and certification programs to develop relevant skills for prospective and current tourism and hospitality employees. For more information, visit www.go2hr.ca.

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