
Hospitality
SASKATCHEWAN
AWARDS
of Excellence

SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Jim Bence, President & CEO, Hospitality Saskatchewan

Hospitality Saskatchewan is proud to announce the finalists and winners of the 2026 Hospitality Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence. These prestigious awards celebrate the very best of Saskatchewan's tourism sector, honouring individuals, businesses, organizations, and events that deliver outstanding experiences for residents and visitors.

The Awards of Excellence highlight those who set new standards in hospitality, create unforgettable attractions, and inspire lasting memories that showcase the spirit of our province. More than recognition, they encourage industry to continually strive for innovation and excellence.

"We are delighted to unveil the 2026 finalists and winners," said Jim Bence, President & CEO of Hospitality Saskatchewan. "Each embodies the creativity, dedication, and resilience that define Saskatchewan tourism and strengthen its future."

GREETINGS FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

Message from the Honourable Alana Ross, Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I am pleased to extend greetings to everyone attending the 2026 Hospitality Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence. As Minister of Parks, Culture and Sport, and Minister responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan, I recognize the many individuals and organizations whose efforts strengthen and advance our tourism industry. Your creativity, commitment and passion continue to showcase our province and deliver memorable experiences for visitors and residents alike.

COVER: *Park Town Hotel Saskatoon*
Employer of the Year 2025

TRAVEL MEDIA PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

This as award recognizes an outstanding Canadian storyteller for their commitment to excellence in storytelling and a published body of travel media work that celebrates and showcases Saskatchewan's tourism destinations, experiences, and stories.



RUDDERLESS TRAVEL

Rudderless Travel challenges misconceptions about Saskatchewan through award-winning digital storytelling that showcases the province's culture, landscapes, communities, and hidden stories. Its Saskatoon travel guide earned First Place for the Host Destination Award from the Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC), highlighting the city's culinary scene, riverfront, and cultural vitality. Through YouTube, podcasts, and Substack journalism, Rudderless Travel has also featured authentic Indigenous experiences at kâniyâsihk Culture Camps and Wanuskewin Heritage Park, alongside Saskatchewan adventurer Ashlyn George. Combining high-quality videography, thoughtful journalism, humour, and accessible storytelling, Rudderless Travel encourages audiences to see Saskatchewan differently, inspires visitation, celebrates local communities, and demonstrates the powerful role travel media plays in strengthening the province's tourism industry.



ASHLYN GEORGE

Ashlyn George is one of Saskatchewan's most recognized travel storytellers, dedicating 12 years to promoting the province through journalism, photography, broadcast, and digital media. During 2025–2026, she co-authored and photographed ***Lonely Planet's Best Bike Rides Canada***, showcasing Saskatchewan cycling routes to an international audience. Her work generated 7.7 million social media views and included 22 Saskatchewan features and 34 media interviews. Through ***The Lost Girl's Guide to Finding the World***, Ashlyn highlights communities, Indigenous tourism, outdoor recreation, culinary experiences, and year-round travel. Her work has appeared in leading national and international media and earned numerous tourism and photography awards, establishing her as an influential ambassador for Saskatchewan tourism and inspiring millions to discover the province.



SCOTT HERDER & MEGAN INDOE

During summer 2025, travel journalists Scott Herder & Megan Indoe partnered with Tourism Saskatchewan to showcase Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert National Park, Waskesiu Lake, and Manitou Beach through engaging, educational storytelling. Their evergreen content combined creative filmmaking, including an innovative Regina hyperlapse, with thoughtful journalism designed to inspire visitation. Coverage of Manitou Beach introduced its distinctive landscape, history, and experiences to new audiences, while reporting from Prince Albert National Park during wildfire season provided balanced, responsible travel information. By directing travellers to official safety information while highlighting destinations that remained open, their work supported tourism businesses during a challenging season. Through compelling visuals, responsible reporting, and community-focused storytelling, the campaign strengthened awareness of Saskatchewan as a diverse and welcoming destination.

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR / 20+ EMPLOYEES

Presented to a tourism business that exemplifies industry best practices in all aspects of its operations and is thus an example of all-round business excellence in the tourism industry.



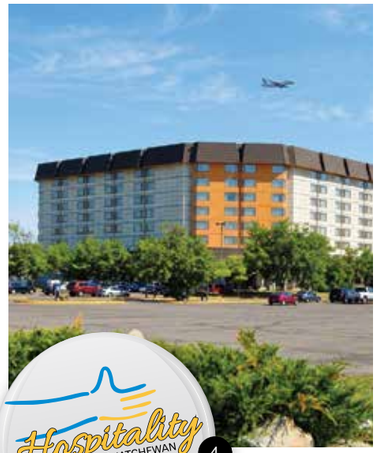
MANITOU SPRINGS RESORT & MINERAL SPA

Manitou Springs Resort & Mineral Spa has made significant contributions to Saskatchewan tourism, wellness hospitality, and the regional economy. Home to Canada's largest indoor mineral spa, the resort celebrates the unique heritage of Little Manitou Lake while continually enhancing the guest experience. Investments in staff training, safety, operational efficiency, mineral pool experiences, cleanliness, and dining have strengthened guest satisfaction and year-round visitation. With more than 20 employees, the resort supports local employment and professional development. Through community partnerships, regional collaboration, strategic marketing, and wellness tourism, Manitou Springs Resort attracts visitors, supports local businesses, and strengthens Saskatchewan's tourism reputation.



SASKTEL CENTRE

SaskTel Centre exemplifies excellence in Saskatchewan tourism through exceptional guest service, operational excellence, innovation, and community impact. As one of the province's premier entertainment destinations, it attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually through concerts, sporting events, cultural celebrations, Indigenous gatherings, festivals, and community events. Tourism spending associated with its events generates an estimated $100 million to $172 million in economic output while supporting local businesses and jobs. With approximately 90% repeat business, SaskTel Centre is recognized for professionalism, safety, inclusivity, and adaptability. Its team continues to innovate through successful events such as Rock the River and new festival experiences, strengthening community connections and showcasing Saskatchewan as a vibrant, welcoming destination.



SASKATOON INN & CONFERENCE CENTRE

Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre has been a cornerstone of Saskatchewan hospitality for more than four decades, welcoming leisure travellers, business guests, conference delegates, sports teams, and tour groups. The independent hotel supports Saskatchewan's economy by purchasing more than $5 million in goods and services annually, prioritizing local suppliers. Its diverse team of 175 hospitality professionals' benefit from career development, immigration support, and industry partnerships. Saskatoon Inn demonstrates community leadership through the Not In My City initiative, sustainability efforts through Green Key, and partnerships supporting Indigenous tourism and local experiences. Through exceptional hospitality, workforce development, sustainability, community engagement, and local investment, Saskatoon Inn continues to strengthen Saskatchewan's visitor economy and tourism industry.

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR / UNDER 20 EMPLOYEES

Presented to a tourism business that exemplifies industry best practices in all aspects of its operations and is thus an example of all-round business excellence in the tourism industry.



BACK2NATURE WELLNESS & ADVENTURES

Back2Nature Wellness & Adventures is an innovative Saskatchewan tourism business creating high-quality outdoor wellness experiences that connect guests with nature and one another. Founded by Kyla Bouvier, the business combines guided recreation, mindfulness, wellness, and Saskatchewan's natural landscapes. Experiences include stand-up paddleboarding, sauna and cold plunges, retreats, Qigong, meditation, corporate wellness, and nature-based team building. Back2Nature demonstrates excellence through professional guiding, guest safety, creative programming, and strong partnerships with local businesses, parks, accommodations, and wellness providers. By showcasing Saskatchewan's four-season outdoor opportunities while supporting local communities and visitor well-being, Back2Nature offers authentic, restorative experiences that strengthen the province's tourism industry and demonstrate innovation, collaboration, professionalism, and a strong commitment to sustainable tourism.



MANITOU BEACH BUSKING FESTIVAL

The 6th Annual Manitou Beach Busking Festival expanded in 2026 from a Canada Day celebration into a 10-day cultural event, encouraging longer visitor stays and supporting local businesses, tourism, arts, and community connections. Organized entirely by volunteers, the festival partnered with 10 local businesses to host simultaneous performances throughout Manitou Beach. Programming included free busking performances, feature-stage concerts, workshops, community outreach concerts, and a gear exchange. New outreach initiatives brought performers to seniors' facilities and Camp Easter Seal, making the festival more accessible. Through strong volunteer leadership, community partnerships, inclusive programming, and economic impact, the Manitou Beach Busking Festival strengthens the region's cultural identity and enhances Manitou Beach's reputation as a vibrant Saskatchewan tourism destination.



HIDDEN HAVEN TINY HOUSES & NORDIC SPA

Hidden Haven Tiny Houses & Nordic Spa has grown from a family passion project into one of Southwest Saskatchewan's most distinctive tourism experiences. Since launching in 2022, the Wallace family has expanded from one off-grid tiny house to additional accommodation and a Nordic spa. Guests enjoy prairie landscapes, hiking, stargazing, Northern Lights viewing, outdoor recreation, hydrotherapy, and authentic Saskatchewan hospitality. Hidden Haven attracts visitors from across Canada, the United States, and beyond while encouraging longer stays and year-round tourism. Through partnerships with local businesses, regional promotion, and innovative marketing, the business strengthens Swift Current's visitor economy. Its entrepreneurial growth and focus on nature-based wellness tourism make Hidden Haven an outstanding Saskatchewan tourism success story.

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

*Presented to a business demonstrating excellence in equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging while creating a safe, respectful, and supportive workplace. The Employer of the Year promotes innovation, work-life balance, employee well-being, empowerment, recognition, personal growth, and integrity, fostering a positive workplace where employees can thrive.*nne



ANNE WILLNER / THE STORE BY THE SHORE

Anne Willner, owner of The Store by the Shore at Douglas Provincial Park, exemplifies an outstanding Saskatchewan employer. Since purchasing the business with her husband, Wayne, in 2010, Anne has expanded its amenities while creating an inclusive, supportive workplace. She employs people of diverse ages, backgrounds, abilities, and life experiences, providing respectful feedback, individualized mentorship, and opportunities for personal growth. Many employees return year after year, reflecting the positive workplace culture she has created. Anne also recognizes employees through a tip-matching program and an annual staff celebration, where individual contributions are acknowledged. Her compassion, high standards, fairness, and commitment to helping employees reach their potential make Anne an exceptional candidate for Employer of the Year.



GLOBEX MANAGEMENT

Globex Management demonstrates employer excellence by investing in its people and fostering growth, diversity, inclusion, and well-being. Founded in 2018, the company emerged from pandemic challenges to manage 13 properties across Saskatchewan and Ontario, supported by a strong people-first culture. Globex prioritizes internal advancement, with women representing more than 60% of its management team, and provides leadership development, training, and ownership opportunities. Its diverse workforce represents 11 countries and nationalities, supported by newcomer settlement and immigration programs. Flexible work arrangements, health benefits, vacation, bonuses, team events, and its annual Day of Caring further strengthen employee engagement. Globex's commitment to opportunity, belonging, teamwork, and employee development makes it an exemplary hospitality employer.



SASKATOON INN & CONFERENCE CENTRE

Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre demonstrates employer excellence by creating an inclusive workplace where employees are valued, supported, and encouraged to grow. Its 175-person team includes more than 120 newcomers to Canada, representing diverse cultures and perspectives. Since 2023, the hotel has supported 48 employees through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program while partnering with Saskatchewan Polytechnic and Francophone employment initiatives to develop hospitality professionals. Annual performance reviews, internal advancement, employee celebrations, and long-service recognition foster engagement and career development, with many employees serving for decades. Through compassion, integrity, teamwork, cultural inclusion, and meaningful employee support, Saskatoon Inn strengthens Saskatchewan's hospitality workforce and creates a workplace where employees can build successful, long-term careers.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

The Tourism Rookie of the Year Award is a special recognition presented to an emerging talent in the tourism industry. This prestigious award's purpose is to celebrate businesses/individuals that have made remarkable contributions and achievements in their early stages of a new tourism business, event, or service. The recipient of this award will be an entity that was launched after January 1, 2025



SHAYNA COSSETTE BIRDING GUIDE

Shayna Cossette Birding Guide is an emerging tourism business founded by biologist, photographer, and birding enthusiast Shayna Cossette. After moving to Denare Beach in October 2025, Shayna quickly became involved in the community and recognized the region's potential for birding tourism. She now offers birding retreats, guided walks, and private excursions while collaborating with local businesses and the municipality to expand tourism opportunities. Shayna's commitment extends beyond her business through volunteering at community events, serving on the Northern Gateway Museum board and Tourism Collaborative, and spearheading the Denare Beach Birding Club. Her expertise, entrepreneurial spirit, community involvement, and passion for nature position her as an exciting contributor to northern Saskatchewan's growing tourism industry.

THE SWEET SPOT AT MADGE LAKE

The Sweet Spot at Madge Lake has become a distinctive tourism destination within Duck Mountain Provincial Park by combining recreation, entertainment, community involvement, and exceptional hospitality. Beyond ice cream and mini golf, it offers adult and children's tournaments, live music, family-friendly activities, and fundraising events supporting local organizations. Its signature BBQ Bash at Ministik Beach combines barbecue cuisine and live entertainment in a scenic lakeside setting, attracting visitors to the region. Thoughtful amenities, including hula hoops, sidewalk chalk, and a children's sandbox, enhance the family experience. Through innovation, personalized service, community partnerships, and continual investment in new experiences, The Sweet Spot encourages longer stays, repeat visitation, and memorable experiences while strengthening tourism at Madge Lake.



SPOOKTACULAR TREATS FOR ALL

Spooktacular Treats for All is an innovative community tourism event created through collaboration among Tourism Estevan, the City of Estevan, local organizations, businesses, and volunteers. Designed as a safe, accessible, and inclusive Halloween experience, the event welcomes families and children of all abilities, including those with sensory sensitivities and accessibility needs. Through themed displays, interactive activities, sensory-friendly experiences, and creative marketing, the event attracts families from Estevan and surrounding communities. Strong partnerships with community organizations have increased participation while promoting local attractions and services. Spooktacular Treats for All demonstrates creativity, collaboration, and a commitment to accessibility, helping position Estevan as a welcoming, family-friendly destination.

INDIGENOUS TOURISM EXPERIENCE

This award recognizes a business, partnership, organization, event, or attraction that incorporates Saskatchewan Indigenous culture, traditions, and stories into its product offering. This recipient demonstrates a commitment to delivering authentic Indigenous experiences and working collaboratively to enhance the tourism landscape in Saskatchewan.



THE POUNDMAKER MUSEUM AND GALLERY

The Poundmaker Museum and Gallery, a band-owned cultural institution led by curator, theatre director, author, and filmmaker Floyd Favel, provides authentic cultural and educational experiences rooted in Cree history, language, and traditions. The museum offers tours of significant sites, including the Cut Knife Battlefield and Broken Knife Lookout, while preserving and showcasing important historical artifacts. Winter programming transforms the museum into an *acimowikamik*, or Storytelling House, where traditional stories share Cree worldviews, language, and culture. The museum also supports cultural repatriation and language revitalization, including workshops in endangered Plains Indian Sign Language. Through consistent, meaningful programming, Poundmaker Museum attracts local, national, and international visitors while preserving and sharing Indigenous cultural knowledge.



DAKOTA DUNES RESORT

Dakota Dunes Resort, located on Whitecap Dakota Nation, is a leading Indigenous-owned destination showcasing Dakota culture, traditions, and values while supporting sustainable economic growth. Working with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists, and community members, the resort offers authentic experiences through storytelling, Indigenous astronomy, cuisine, artwork, language, championship golf, and Saskatchewan's first Indigenous-inspired thermal spa. With annual visitation exceeding 75,000 guests, Dakota Dunes contributes significantly to Saskatchewan's visitor economy. Of its 161 employees, 106 identify as Indigenous, creating meaningful employment and leadership opportunities. Through cultural authenticity, environmental stewardship, partnerships, and community investment, Dakota Dunes advances reconciliation, strengthens Indigenous tourism, and supports the economic prosperity and self-determination of Whitecap Dakota Nation.



WANUSKEWIN HERITAGE PARK

Wanuskewin Heritage Park, a gathering place for Northern Plains Indigenous Peoples for more than 6,400 years, is a leading Indigenous cultural tourism destination. Located on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis, Wanuskewin shares living Indigenous culture through guided tours, archaeology, land-based learning, cuisine, performances, workshops, galleries, and its Plains bison herd. From July 2025 to June 2026, the park welcomed 52,551 visitors and delivered 1,463 guided tours and 1,677 cultural programs and events. Through partnerships with Elders, Knowledge Keepers, artists, and communities, Wanuskewin supports Indigenous economic opportunities, cultural preservation, environmental stewardship, education, and reconciliation while strengthening Saskatchewan's international reputation as a destination for authentic Indigenous tourism.

TOURISM EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

This award recognizes a front-line employee whose professionalism, dedication, attitude, and quality of service exemplifies excellence in the tourism industry.



DALTON ALTSTADT

Dalton Altstadt, Bell person and Shuttle Driver at Saskatoon Inn & Conference Centre, exemplifies Saskatchewan hospitality through professionalism, dedication, and exceptional guest service. He warmly welcomes visitors, assists with transportation and luggage, and shares extensive knowledge of Saskatoon's attractions, restaurants, events, and outdoor experiences. During a severe winter storm, Dalton demonstrated extraordinary commitment by remaining at the airport through delays and difficult conditions until he connected with an arriving guest and safely transported them to the hotel. His personalized recommendations encourage visitors to explore Saskatoon and Saskatchewan, supporting local businesses and enhancing the visitor experience. Respected by guests and colleagues, Dalton's reliability, enthusiasm, and genuine care make him an outstanding tourism ambassador.



HILDA NASH

Hilda Nash, Executive Housekeeper at Sandman Hotel & Suites Regina, exemplifies dedication, leadership, and excellence in Saskatchewan hospitality. Since joining the hotel as a Laundry Attendant when it opened in 2004, she progressed through the department before becoming Executive Housekeeper in 2011. For more than 20 years, Hilda has maintained exceptional standards while mentoring colleagues and fostering teamwork, accountability, and respect. Her commitment to professional development includes emerit Certification and Service Excellence Certification. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Hilda demonstrated remarkable resilience, ensuring guests continued to receive safe, welcoming accommodations. Her extensive community volunteering, professionalism, compassion, and long-standing commitment to guest service make Hilda an outstanding ambassador for Saskatchewan's tourism industry.



VALERIE LEPPKE

Valerie Leppke has demonstrated exceptional dedication, versatility, and customer service throughout more than 18 years with the Daily Grind. She has continually expanded her skills, from supervising staff and bartending to coffee roasting, gelato making, baking, social media, and managing tourism-related orders. Valerie knows her customers by name and takes pride in providing quality products and memorable experiences. Her knowledge of the region allows her to confidently recommend local businesses, museums, attractions, and neighboring communities, strengthening the visitors' experience. An entrepreneur at heart, she has also developed a successful cake business while continuing to support the Daily Grind. Valerie's enthusiasm, community spirit, creativity, and commitment make her an outstanding Saskatchewan tourism ambassador.

TOURISM BUILDER

Presented by Tourism Saskatchewan.
This individual has made tourism an important part of their life's work, and their actions have had a positive impact on the industry they serve. Tourism Builders have helped to shape our sector as a vibrant contributor to the economy and position Saskatchewan as a welcoming destination.



BRIAN HOFFART

For more than three decades, Brian Hoffart has helped build Saskatchewan tourism through business leadership, sector service and public governance. Together with his late wife, Sylvia, Brian built and operated Bait-Masters Hunting Camp on the shores of Green Lake. He served on Tourism Saskatchewan's board of directors for three consecutive terms, bringing his outfitting expertise to inform strategic direction, as well as serving as President of the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association and helping found the Saskatchewan Commission of Professional Outfitters. Brian's contribution extends well beyond his successful business, and his many titles include entrepreneur, industry spokesperson, association leader, organization builder and Crown corporation director. His work has strengthened professional outfitting, elevated northern and rural tourism, and helped Saskatchewan compete for high-value hunting and fishing visitors.

AWARD SELECTION COMMITTEE

Hospitality Saskatchewan extends our sincere gratitude to the dedicated individuals who undertook the important task of selecting the finalists and winners of the 2026 Hospitality Saskatchewan Awards of Excellence. To ensure fairness and integrity throughout the process, committee members were recused from deliberations in any category where their own business or organization was nominated. Their commitment to impartiality and excellence helped uphold the credibility and prestige of these awards.

Hospitality
SASKATCHEWAN









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The voice of the tourism, hotel, and hospitality industries!

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