

# Nicole Guertin

Sue Nielsen

Speaker Reporter

This week's Twenty Questions features an interview with Niska Leadership Centre's Nicole Guertin who will be developing a Francophone Interactive Tour (FIT) in the region.

**1. What is your full name?**

Nicole Guertin.

**2. Where were you born?**

Kapuskasung, Ontario.

**3. What projects are you affiliated with?**

Jocelyn Blais and I, partners in the Niska Leadership Centre, have recently been mandated by Le centre culturel ARTEM to develop a Francophone Interactive Tours (FIT) project for the region.

**4. Describe your role with the Francophone Interactive Tour Project (FIT)?**

Our role is to assist ARTEM throughout the development and implementation of the project. Here are some of the elements that we will be assisting with.

- Getting locals and community organizations to get involved in identifying and prioritizing existing Points of interest (POI), linking the POIs into different tours or circuits and then developing an interesting way of telling these unique stories.

- Coordinate the development of the audio, video and written scripts for each of the points of interest in the tours.

- Work with the Information technology specialists to deliver a mobile based product accessible for the community

- Get the residents of the area to become tourists in their own community by trying the different tours and promoting them in their social networks.

- Develop and implement the plan to promote the tours to the 500,000 francophones living within a four-hour radius of Temiskaming Shores.

- Write a best practice manual that will help other communities across Ontario or Canada to learn from this innovative project.

**5. How did the idea come about for these tours?**

I have been involved in tourism development in Northern Ontario since 1996. In 2007-2008, while I was CEO of Direction Ontario, a tourism organization to promote francophone tourism in Ontario, we looked at a similar project using GPS units on a provincial level. We realized that the future was really in using mobile phones, tying together community points of interest to tell a story. The mobile technology for this type of project wasn't available and intelligent phones/tablets did not have a large enough market penetration. The project was put on hold. While I was living in Whistler, a colleague called to let me know that she met a professor at the University of Ottawa that developed the technology that could now make this project possible.

**6. Who is ARTEM and how are they connected to this project?**

ARTEM is a cultural organization promoting the development of cultural and artistic life in the francophone community of Temiskaming Shores. They wanted to develop a project to reach people of all ages including the younger generation. The cultural link of the project and the interest for youths for web/mobile based

technologies, sparked interest with the organization. The board of directors saw the potential of such a project that would allow locals to tell their stories and using culture as an economic stimulus was inspiring to them.

**7. Describe the project.**

The Francophone Interactive Tour Project (FIT) identifies points of interests on a specific theme that will be linked together to tell a unique story. The local users or visitors will use a mobile application, available on smart phones and tablets to hear and/or see the story unfold while being at the specific point of interest location. Walkers, cyclists, motorists and even boaters will be using this free application. The information

will be transmitted as short vignettes presented using different communication mediums: written, visual (pictures), audio and/or video. The points of interests will be regrouped around the following themes: history of the region, francophone contribution, arts, agro-tourism and the business community. Characters will be chosen to tell the stories of the different themes by presenting the different point of interests i.e. Father Paradis, a legend in the region will tell the story about the francophone pioneers up to the decline of the silver rush.

**8. Who is providing funding for FIT?**

Applications have gone to Fednor, Trillium, Northern Ontario Heritage Corporation-internship program and Healthy Community Grant. The applications are presently being reviewed and hope for the support of these programs. In-kind and financial contributions are also being provided by the Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming (CSCT) and a provincial research network. ARTEM and the Niska Leadership Centre have decided to initiate the first steps of the project even before the final confirmation from the different funding programs, as the timing is critical for the success of the project.

**9. Why is it important for people to get outside and be active in nature?**

Another key aspect of the project is the development of Interactive Health Tours. The same technological application will be used to develop Interactive Health Tours (IHT) that will encourage people to be active in the great outdoors. We all know that people have to be more active -- the obesity rate, the diabetes rate, are indicators that something has to change in our life habits. We need to find a motivator and this motivator can be using the interactive tours with the concept of "outdoor fitness". The Centre de santé communautaire du Témiskaming is a key partner for the Interactive Health Tours as they have a really good scope of the health needs of francophones.

**10. How is the Interactive Health Tour going to work?**

Different health interactive tours would be developed based on age groups and capacities. People will be guided to follow a route in their communities and exercise along the way. A staircase, a tree or even a parking meter could be used as a prompt for the exercise. Participants will watch a video on their mobile to see how the exercise is properly done. Health tips will be



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narrated and once people are comfortable with the circuit, then they can decide to continue with this circuit or move to the next level. There will be different levels for each of the Health Tours.

**11. What communities will take part in this initiative?**

The first phase of the project will focus on the Temiskaming Shores area in order to have a pilot tour available for the September 5th AFMO conference. We intend to expand the project to the communities of Cobalt, Belle Vallée, Earleton and Elk Lake.

**12. Who will benefit from the project?**

The community will benefit from an economic development perspective. By aiming to reach the 500,000 francophones that are living in a four-hour radius from the community, there is a huge opportunity to increase tourism in the area.

For the locals, it will be a chance to learn about their history, their existing assets and improve their health. At this time, the project is focused on the francophone community of the Temiskaming area as it is being led by francophone organizations.

**13. Are you hosting public brainstorming sessions?**

The community brainstorming sessions is a key to the success of this project. We are planning sessions on specific themes. All meetings will be held on Tuesdays at the Centre de santé du Témiskaming at 6:45 pm. Anyone interested in the project is welcome.

**14. Who is going to create the technology for the project?**

We are working with Guy-Vincent Jordan, president of Ottawa-based Epsidon Inc, a software company specializing in mobile applications.

**15. How will this project benefit other communities across the province?**

An aspect of the project is to develop a best practice manual that can be used by other communities. We are hoping that the success of this project will stimulate other regions to develop something similar. We are still only in the very early stage of our project and we already have two other communities that have shown interest. We want to start the project now in order to take advantage of the Association of Francophone Municipalities conference that will be held in the region in early September to present the product to all the attendees.

**16. How is the Association of Francophone Municipalities of Ontario (AFMO) involved?**

The Association of Francophone Municipalities of Ontario will be meeting for the first time in Temiskaming Shores for their annual conference, from September 5th to the 7th. We have the incredible opportunity to showcase this pilot project to 175 francophone municipal leaders from across Ontario. We want the region to be a model for other communities to be inspired to tell their own stories.

**17. What are the strengths of the Temiskaming region?**

This region has so much to offer; we need to see these strengths and find a way to utilize them for the sustainable development of our com-

munities. The 3-2-1 concept describes very well the strengths of the Temiskaming region. Three cultures - two provinces - one lake.

\* Beautiful Lake Temiskaming is such a great natural asset with so much potential.

\* The three cultures: the First Nations that have been here for thousand of years, the arrivals of the voyageurs, the francophone and anglophone cultures.

\* The incredible history of the region that has been documented in hundreds of books. Very rare are the communities with such a documented history.

\* The diversity of the economy from agriculture, industrial, mining, forestry, services to tourism sectors has ensured that we are economically stable

\* We have only started to touch on the opportunities of working with the Quebec side to promote the area.

**18. How will your project encourage visitors to come to Temiskaming?**

Lots of people are coming through the region at the present time. Our problem is having a tourism product that will permit them to spend a day or even a few hours exploring the region. A promotion tool will be individuals participating in the development of the points of interests, the characters and the tours of this project.

**19. What inspires Nicole Guertin?**

This is a question that I often ask myself when I'm over my head in a new project. I have this drive inside of me to change things and make them better. My strongest strength is getting individuals, groups, communities and region to work together on a common project. I get inspired to see how everyone's talents and knowledge can be brought together to build something better.

**20. Anyone to thank so far?**

The project is possible because of Réjeanne Belisle-Massie that recognized the opportunity within the first few minutes I spoke to her about the FIT project. Within days, she had presented the concept to ARTEM's board of directors and they were ready to move forward.

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