****

**Speaker Bios**

**Ron Erdmann**

**Erdmann’s Gardens and Greenhouses’**

Ron along with his wife, Wendy and sons, Shane and Cody own and operate Erdmann’s

Gardens & Greenhouses. The farm is located in the south east corner of Westlock County where they produce fresh, field grown vegetables and spring bedding plants. 2019 is their 37th year in business.

Winners of the 2009 Growth Alberta Business of the Year Award and also Business Excellence

Award, this family takes growing safe, healthy, great tasting food very seriously. In 2017, Ron and the family farm won the AFFPA Farm Direct Marketer of the Year Award. Ron has served on several Farmers’ Market boards over the years and is also a past board member and past president of AFFPA. Ron believes that the farm direct industry plays a very important and educational role in the connection between urban and rural Albertans.

**Janelle Herbert**

**Riverbend Garden**

Janelle has lived on Riverbend Gardens land for all but 20 months of her life. After marrying her high school sweetheart Aaron and spending a few years months in the city they moved back to the farm in 2006 to work the land and haven’t looked back. The farm is now home to their three children too!

**Gary Hughes**

**Local Development Manager, Sobeys**

Gary Hughes has been with Sobeys for over 20 years, starting out as a clerk in a Garden Market IGA store and progressed his way up to become the Store Manager. There are very few jobs within the store that Gary has not done at some point. Looking for a new challenge Gary took a role as an Assistant Category Manager for Sobeys in Western Canada based in Edmonton followed up by transitioning to Calgary as Category Manager. In this role Gary oversaw multiple categories for Western Canada in the Sobeys, Safeway and IGA banners. In 2017 Gary had the opportunity to join a newly created Field Merchandising team that was focused on bringing Local Products to life in Alberta and the Prairies which is the role he is currently in today.

**Nicola Irving**

**Irvings Farm Fresh Ltd.**

Nicola is the joint owner of Irvings Farm Fresh Ltd with her husband Alan. The Irvings’ have been in business for 11 years and operate a recently expanded modern pork processing facility, located on their farm near Camrose, producing artisanal products from locally grown pork, and specializing in their own free range Berkshire pork. The majority of their revenue comes from Farmers’ Market sales. Nicola has a BSc (Hons) Agriculture, and prior to starting the business, Nicola worked for the UK’s largest animal feed manufacturer, and has a background in animal nutrition, customer service, sales management, and commodity trading.

**Chris Lerohl**

**Honest Dumplings**

Chris is the business development and strategic lead for Honest Dumplings, previously he was the Business Development (BD) Manager at TEC Edmonton where he managed the BD team and developed an R&D program (UA Solve) to $500k revenue within 2 years. His role supported entrepreneurs in both business development and technology development. His strengths include; developing strategic partnerships, people management, identifying market opportunities, analyzing the strength of new technologies and helping to determine the best commercialization strategy. He has technical and research experience in food, agriculture, energy systems, clean technologies, and communications.

**Stephanie Markakis-Plouffe**

**Owner/Baker Extraordinaire**

**Baking Instructor, Mentor, Business Coach**

Hello my name is Stephanie. I am a mother of two lovely teenagers, a wife of almost 20 years, a business owner, mentor, baking instructor and business coach. I started my journey as an entrepreneur over 15 years ago. I had many different business throughout that time but decided to take my passion to the next level and started a baking business. I have been baking for over 20 years, with different charities and organizations around the city. My love for baking and teaching has brought to this place in my journey, helping entrepreneurs see their dreams come to life is extremely rewarding and has become the main focus in my business today.

**Andrew Neels**

**Location Leader – Southern Irrigation Red Deer**

I am originally from Chilliwack, BC. I started with Southern Irrigation in 2011 at 18 years old. I moved to Lethbridge in 2012 and worked part time at the store there while completing a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Lethbridge. I was offered the opportunity to start up and manage Southern Irrigation third store in Red Deer and moved up in November of 2018.

**Christie Pollack**

**Christie’s** [**Gardens and Greenhouses Ltd.**](https://www.facebook.com/Christies-Gardens-and-Greenhouses-Ltd-194449600707549/)

Christie is a horticulturist, blogger, project lover, award winner, and dream chaser. She spend her days running her year-round greenhouse, growing plants, and writing. She has an education in horticulture and hands on experience on what it takes to grow a really good plant. Whether you want that first vegetable patch, containers on the deck, or a really nice indoor tropical plant for your desk, she’s your girl.

**Melissa and Matt Schur**

**The Old Red Barn**

They provide “A Taste of the Farm” at The Old Red Barn in Leduc County. The Old Red Barn is a 1950’s barn on their family’s working dairy farm. Their mission is to educate people about agriculture by debunking myths on farm practices to help consumers understand where their food comes from, and how it is produced. They do this with farm to table dinners, agriculture education, and on farm agri-tourism experiences**.**

**Rob Spencer**

**Alberta Agriculture & Forestry**

Rob has been a Commercial Horticulture Specialist with the Ag-Info Centre in Stettler, AB for 16 years.  He specializes in horticulture crop production extension, delivering information in a wide range of formats, from print manuals, factsheets (print and electronic), newsletters, presentations, field days, conferences and via the phone and email.  Rob is the author and editor of the monthly e-newsletter, Hort Snacks, which has been running for over 10 years. Rob has a BSA (Honours), majoring in Horticulture, and an MSc, majoring in post-harvest potato pathology, from the University of Saskatchewan.

**Lindsay Sutton**

**Market Development Specialist at Government of Alberta**

Market Development Specialist at Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF) where she uses her varied industry experience to coach Alberta food makers in driving profitable and sustainable growth for their business. With over a decade of experience in the food and biotech industry, she has become a resource for new global developments and emerging trends. Before joining AF, she leveraged her technical and marketing skills to assist in bringing an ingredient from start-up to a multi-million dollar success story. She has a passion and the expertise in food trends, food science, commercialization, worldwide regulations, food marketing and has been a speaker at a variety of events throughout North America.

**John Toogood**

**Lawyer - McGee Richard Toogood LLP**

John was born and raised in a Southern Alberta farming/ranching community. He attended University of Alberta and Dalhousie University and has worked in hospital administration and in private law practice. For the last 20 years, he has been in private practice as a solicitor. His practice experience includes a range of personal and business services. In recent years, his practice has focused on two main areas: helping people prepare Wills and advising executors about handling estates; and secondly, advising in the charity and not-for-profit sector. Through working closely with Laird Hunter, whose practice has long focused on charity and not-for-profit law, they assist organizations with CRA compliance (including initial charity registrations and not-for-profit exempt status), incorporation and corporate matters at both the provincial and federal bylaws, corporate structure, reorganizations, governance, social enterprise and the like.