

IMPACT

SUSTAINABILITY TRAVEL & TOURISM

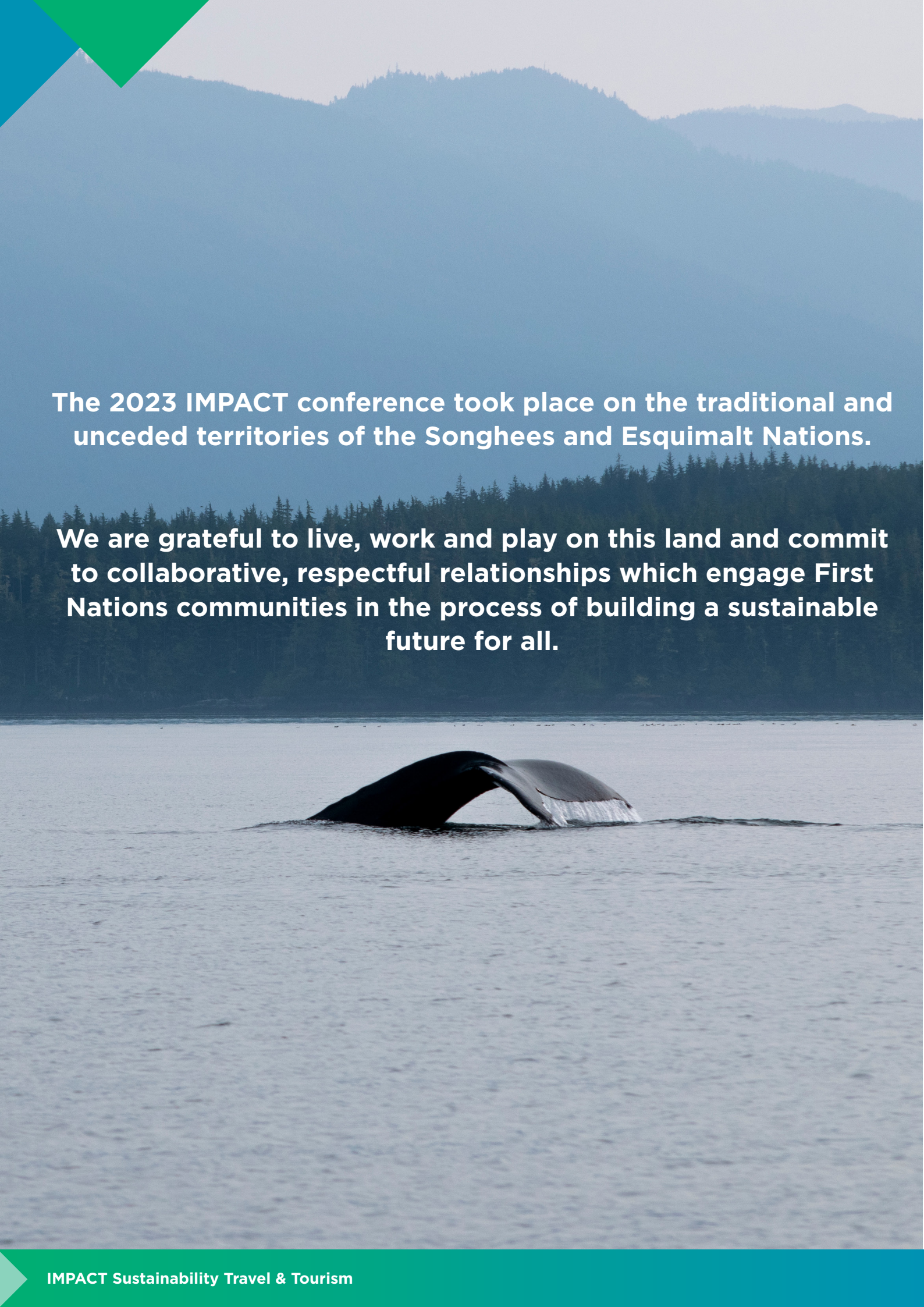
2023 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS PAPER

JANUARY 23-25, 2023

VICTORIA, BC

A COLLABORATIVE
NATIONAL DIALOGUE
ON INNOVATION AND
THE CONTRIBUTION OF
TOURISM TO CANADA'S
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



A photograph of a whale breaching the water, with its tail fluke visible above the surface. The background shows a dense forest of evergreen trees and a range of mountains under a clear sky. The image is overlaid with white text.

The 2023 IMPACT conference took place on the traditional and unceded territories of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

We are grateful to live, work and play on this land and commit to collaborative, respectful relationships which engage First Nations communities in the process of building a sustainable future for all.

“Regenerative travel creates conditions for communities to thrive.

It preserves the wellness of our residents, the authenticity of our cultures, and the beauty of our natural spaces. It is a transformative approach that prioritizes the healing of damaged systems, both natural and social. It seeks to leave things better than we found them, creating a net-positive impact.”

Kayli Anderson



RECOGNITION

Co-Chairs

Teresa Ryder, Director of Partnerships, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC)
Eugene Thomlinson, Associate Professor and School Director, Royal Roads University

Strategic Partners



Co-Founders



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE INFLUENCE WE HAVE

One focus of the IMPACT conference is to consider the influence the tourism industry can have to change the outcome of the climate crisis. Bob Sandford noted that, while our current course is troubling, tourism can make positive change. During “The View: Is Tourism Sustainable” session, speakers emphasized our ability to converse with leaders and governments and push for decarbonization. Kayli Anderson spoke about her travels, leadership, and how regenerative travel has the power to educate people about the world and the climate crisis, and inspire them to take action to protect the earth. This mindset can be fostered through educating guests. Milena Nikolova taught delegates how travel organizations can offer options that unconsciously direct people towards sustainable actions, creating unconscious behavioral changes. When guests are educated about ecosystems and inspired to reduce their impact on natural spaces, biodiversity can be protected.

Millions travel to our region each year, offering the opportunity to connect and educate people on a massive scale. Tourism is a community based industry; our choices can leverage positive change for our communities.

The industry was hit hard by COVID-19 and lost 20% of its employees. Immediate action is needed to build back the workforce, starting with removing barriers to participation and improving the damaged reputation of working in tourism. Danielle Suarez suggested planning from an employee’s perspective by creating jobs that are flexible and building work environments people want to stay in. Phil Mondor encouraged updating work practices by offering skill building and growth opportunities. Diversity and inclusion measures are important additions that should be built into work practices and performance indicators from the hiring process to the day to day.

PARTNERSHIPS/HYPERCONNECTIVITY

Climate change is not a problem we can solve individually. It will take collective action and relationships, ideally rooted in friendships. We can get more done, and effect more change when we partner, which creates ripple effects throughout our communities.

“We want to be leaders, but we don’t want to be alone.”

Wendy Avis, YVR

In the partnership development workshop, panelists suggested creating friendships first, focusing on building trust, listening, and responding with empathy. This leads to more productive and resilient partnerships based on mutual trust. Speakers underscored the importance of supporting BIPOC businesses and including all stakeholders in decision making. Greg Hopf encouraged delegates to form meaningful relationships with the Indigenous nations in your area, and to start partnership building with good intentions and without an agenda or timeframe.



COMMUNITIES

Tourism is a community-based industry that can have both positive and negative effects on the people whose lives it touches. Strong, community-driven planning initiatives can allow the tourism economy in a region to switch from fossil fuel dependency to a regenerative economic paradigm, as in the case of Ireland. However, when managed poorly, tourism can overwhelm communities, making it harder for residents to enjoy the place they live and turning “tourism” into a bad word. Tourism operators have an obligation to communicate expectations to visitors, and offer support to rural communities. Over-tourism can also damage ecosystems when thousands of people swarm natural spaces without measures to mitigate the potential impacts of visitation. To respond to these problems, tourism must act as a guardian for nature, educating visitors on responsible recreation and creating solutions to relieve the burden on the local ecology.

It's important to consider the impact thousands of guests can have, identify problems and integrate solutions. One delegate suggested offering visitors a “sustainability pledge”, explaining how natural spaces can be harmed, why they need to be protected, and what guests can do. This small action illuminates the reasoning behind the rules, making a stronger case for abiding by them. Landscaping and spatial planning can also have positive environmental and social impacts; for example, by opting for native pollinator species instead of introduced species and incorporating local culture into the design of spaces.

Finally, it's important to engage residents. Hilina Ajakaiye of Meet Boston and Adam Burke of LA Tourism spoke about resident sentiment surveys in their communities. Measuring resident sentiment and including residents in the planning process helps to ensure that tourism development benefits both locals and visitors.

CLIMATE REALITY CHECK: OUR FUTURE WILL COME BY CHANCE OR BY CHOICE

SPEAKER: **Robert Sandford**, Chair of Water and Climate Security
United Nations Institute for Water, Environment and Health

Robert Sandford kicked off the conference by delivering his annual Climate Reality Check.

Sandford warned that COP 27 in Egypt was not successful. We are not going to reduce our carbon emissions by 40% by 2030, nor stay within 2°C warming. Feedback loops in the ecosystems are beginning, and it's likely that Canada and other northern countries will reach 3°C warming at accelerated rates.

Sandford remarked that no matter how dire the situation is, the tourism sector has the potential to drive change. Tourism must show its capacity to hold the world together, as our governments are not.

“We need to arouse the soul of humanity before it’s too late. Tourism is one of the few global institutions that has the power to do that.”



THE VIEW: IS TOURISM SUSTAINABLE?

PANELISTS:

Assetou Coulibaly, Founder, CHIWARA CO.

Beth Potter, President & CEO, TIAC

Tahara Ochoa Briggs, CISV Canada Youth Representative

Teresa Ryder, Director of Partnerships, ITAC

Marsha Walden, President & CEO, Destination Canada

The first panel of the conference discussed whether tourism is (or could be) sustainable, what the current barriers are and what tourism should look like moving forward.

Panelists included Assetou Coulibaly, founder of CHIWARA CO, Beth Potter, President & CEO of Tourism Industry Association of Canada, Tahara Ochoa Briggs, a CISV Canada Youth representative, Teresa Ryder, Director of Partnerships for the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, and Marsha Walden, President and CEO of Destination Canada.

Panelists discussed the positive and negative outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic travel pause. People started “being tourists” in their own communities, which stimulated local economies in a time of need and connected people to their regions. The downside of this was the “crush of domestic tourism”, as enormous pressure was put on small communities and their ecosystems. These observations prompted suggestions for potential solutions. First, for tourism operators to take responsibility for setting guest guidelines on how to treat communities, frontline workers and ecosystems. Another proposal was to take a ‘quality over quantity’ approach to attracting visitors, by encouraging slow travel rooted in intention and demonstrating best practices which render tourism “a guardian for nature”.

Coulibaly raised the importance of intersectionality and instituting supports for frontline workers and BIPOC staff to address industry challenges such as large influxes of seasonal tourists and low staff numbers.

Tourism operators must ask themselves what relationships they have with their community and environment. Businesses have influence over community, visitors, local government and other businesses. By demonstrating social and environmental responsibility, they encourage others to do the same. Additionally, it is important to measure and track relationship-building progress and communicate initiatives publicly.

WORKSHOP

SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

FACILITATORS

Jill Doucette, Synergy Enterprises

The process of sustainability planning: Assess, Engage, Implement, Communicate

Alexis Kereluk, Connect 7 Group

GDS Index: a global benchmark tool for destination performance improvement

Angela Nagy, GreenStep Solutions

GreenStep's free online sustainability assessment tool

Trevor Jonas Benson & Camilo Montoya-Trevara, Bannikin Trael and Tourism

Flourishing Business Model canvas

Eve Layman, Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association

Biosphere sustainability certification

Christian Muñoz Mejia, Synergy Enterprises

UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Decade of Action

Led by Synergy Enterprises, this workshop gave attendees an overview of sustainability planning. It provided a better understanding of various approaches, frameworks and programs that can help with the planning process.



BEAUTIFUL KPIs & RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

MODERATOR: Mackenzie Brown, Indigenous Tourism Alberta

SPEAKERS: Marco Lucero, Cuidadores de Destinos
Emilie Comeau-Sinclair, Destination Canada
Sarah Justine Leduc-Villeneuve, Tourisme Montréal
Jason Edmunds, Adventure Canada

This panel explored how destination organizations and operators can develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for tourism through inclusive community engagement.

Key Takeaways

- Resident engagement is an ongoing practice and communities should continuously respond to information from nature and from residents.
- It's time for destinations to redefine the relationship between the guests and the hosts in communities.
- Meet residents where they are and find ways to connect with all residents, not just the easy ones.
- Destination management is about building a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship with residents and visitors.



The panel began with a video recording by Marco Lucero. Cuidadores de Destinos is a company based in Chile working with KPIs and resident engagement for more resilient tourism destinations. Marco said communities should improve feedback mechanisms in order to better respond to the environment, creating sustainable systems. Resident engagement is an ongoing practice and communities should continuously respond to information from nature and from residents.


Marco invited the audience to create a new model, where tourism is at the root of the community with both residents and visitors part of the decision-making process.

Next, Mackenzie invited Emilie Comeau-Sinclair, Executive Director - Strategic Initiatives, Destination Development at Destination Canada to speak.

Emilie began by observing the tensions arising from the climate crisis, overtourism, and negative resident sentiment. “If we want to think differently about tourism, then we have to measure differently,” she said.

Emilie asked several questions to get the audience thinking about the opportunities for destinations in Canada, how we can connect, and how we can engage with people in a meaningful way. She stated that regenerative tourism is hard because it’s not a single action, but a continuous process of forward-moving change and evolution. Essential to this process is connecting (and reconnecting) people with each other and the environment.

Her contribution closed with a thought challenge: “How are we redefining the relationship between the guests and the hosts in our community?”



Next, Sarah Justine Leduc-Villeneuve took the stage to share Tourisme Montréal's sustainable tourism strategy. The strategy, called Destination Harmonieuse, launched in May 2020. Its vision is to develop an exemplary destination by 2030 by creating positive impacts on the local community and environment.

Tourisme Montréal conducted a resident sentiment survey in 2022, the beginning of an annual KPI-tracking system. The research measured 30 indicators meant to capture public support for growth, “tourismophobia”, and overall perceptions of tourism. The survey found that 75% of residents support the growth of tourism in Montréal and 84% are in favour of Montréal's touristic promotion and are proud to see tourists come from far away to visit Montréal. However, this data is time bound, so Tourisme Montréal plans to engage on an ongoing basis to ensure their efforts continue to align with their residents.

Part of tourism is acknowledging the traditional land and territories of Indigenous people who were here before us and continue to live here. Not only through verbal land acknowledgements, but through a continuous process of engagement and relationship-building. Mackenzie Brown, Indigenous Tourism Alberta's Director of Industry Development spoke about the Community Tourism Pathway Program, a seven week grassroots community tourism development initiative for Indigenous communities.

Community engagement is not a box to be checked. It is an ongoing process of listening, learning, confirming and enriching. For Indigenous engagement, meet people where they are. Open houses and one-on-one interviews are more effective than online surveys, and Indigenous communities are often unavailable in summer and autumn for hunting and ceremonies.

“Creating community engagement also means creating **relationships** and having **responsibility**, and **communication**, and **kindness**.”

Mackenzie finished by sharing a valuable example: the First Nations-Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI), an initiative that brings communities and Indigenous allies together to co-create economic development and ensure even distribution of benefits.

Then, Jason Edmunds, Expedition Leader with Adventure Canada, took the stage. He shared how his perspective differed from the other speakers, as he is an Inuk from Nunatsiavut, Labrador, and comes from an operator stance.

When he joined the industry, community sentiment around tourism was very negative. He realized that the sentiment was caused by differences in values and communications styles that caused a gap in understanding between operators and Indigenous people. He decided to tackle it because community engagement becomes vital when sentiment is negative.

The number one problem faced by organizations is a lack of community representation. “My recommendation is you’ve got to change the way your business runs. To be more, not only acceptable to the communities,” he said “But somehow ensure that they’re invested in your success, the same way that you’re invested in their success. And so, the mindset of reciprocity.”

LUNCH & LEARN

SPEAKER

Hilina Ajakaiye, Executive Vice President

Greater Boston Convention and Visitor Bureau (Meet Boston)

During this lunch & learn session, Hilina Ajakaiye took delegates on a journey through the past, present and future of Boston tourism. Ajakaiye emphasized the importance of stakeholder inclusion in decision-making, especially locals. Tourism operators must be community leaders. The best place to start is by giving residents a say in their city's future.

Other takeaways were the importance of empowering BIPOC and marginalized people in the community, the value of increasing accessibility by removing barriers, and the impetus to incorporate sustainability, inclusion and diversity initiatives into performance indicators to track progress and be accountable for these values.



PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PANELISTS:

Greg Hopf, Owner, Moccasin Trails

Kristin Dahl, Founder & CEO, Crosscurrent Collective

Jeremy Sampson, CEO, The Travel Foundation

Liz McLoughlin, Development Manager, Zero Ceiling

This panel focused on the importance of partnerships in the tourism industry. The ability to align with other organizations begins with understanding each other through non-judgmental listening and empathetic response. Overall, we should strive for empathetic work cultures that embrace the unique strengths, or “superpowers”, of each organization and individual. We can build hyperconnectivity in our communities by forming extensive, strong partnerships networks. These networks will enable impactful accomplishments on common social goals.

It is important to visit with one another: organize in person and share experiences in purposeful settings. Sharing breaks stereotypes, stigmas, and bias, and creates the foundation to build relationships from. Hopf stressed the importance of building relationships first and partnerships second. Especially when working with Indigenous communities, those reaching out should enter without an agenda, in good faith and with respect for the pace set by the communities they want to work with.

BREAKOUT SESSION

FOSTERING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN TOURISM

SPEAKER: **Georgia Lavender**, Director of Program Operations,
Synergy Foundation

The current economic system is linear: a model that begins with extraction, followed by consumption and ending with waste. In contrast, the Circular Economy Model is designed to keep goods in the system, beginning with resource collection, leading to consumption, and beginning again through reuse and repair, redistribution, reconditioning, and recycling processes.

In this breakout session, Lavender explained the concept of circularity, provided action items for businesses, and encouraged attendees to take action with some next steps.

Key Takeaways

- There is a huge economic opportunity to shift from the current Linear Economic System to a Circular Economy Model
- Businesses have many opportunities to reduce costs and increase profitability by taking advantage of Circular Business Solutions, which fall into 5 re-entry processes for products and materials: Reduce, Reduce and Repair, Redistribute, Recondition, and Recycle.
- We can all take action by looking for opportunities to practice the circular model, such as conscious consumption, starting a conversation, and learning more.

Currently, the economy is only 7.2% circular. Increasing circularity to 17% would cut global GHG emissions by 39%. This is a huge economic opportunity, which could account for 4.5 trillion dollars of revenue by 2030. It's time to stop extracting virgin resources and discarding reusable products - money - into landfills.

“We know our system is broken. We need a **paradigm shift** where waste is seen as a resource.”

The Circular Economy provides practical strategies to achieve a regenerative and distributive economy. As well, the Circular Economy Model aligns with all Sustainable Development Goals, directly or indirectly.

Circular Business Solutions involve 5 re-entry processes for products and materials: Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Redistribute, Recondition, and Recycle. The presentation highlighted a circular business representing these principles in action: Wildwood, a creative consultancy in Victoria that worked with Parkside Hotel to eliminate waste by upcycling hotel room drapes into clothing.

Other Circular Actions

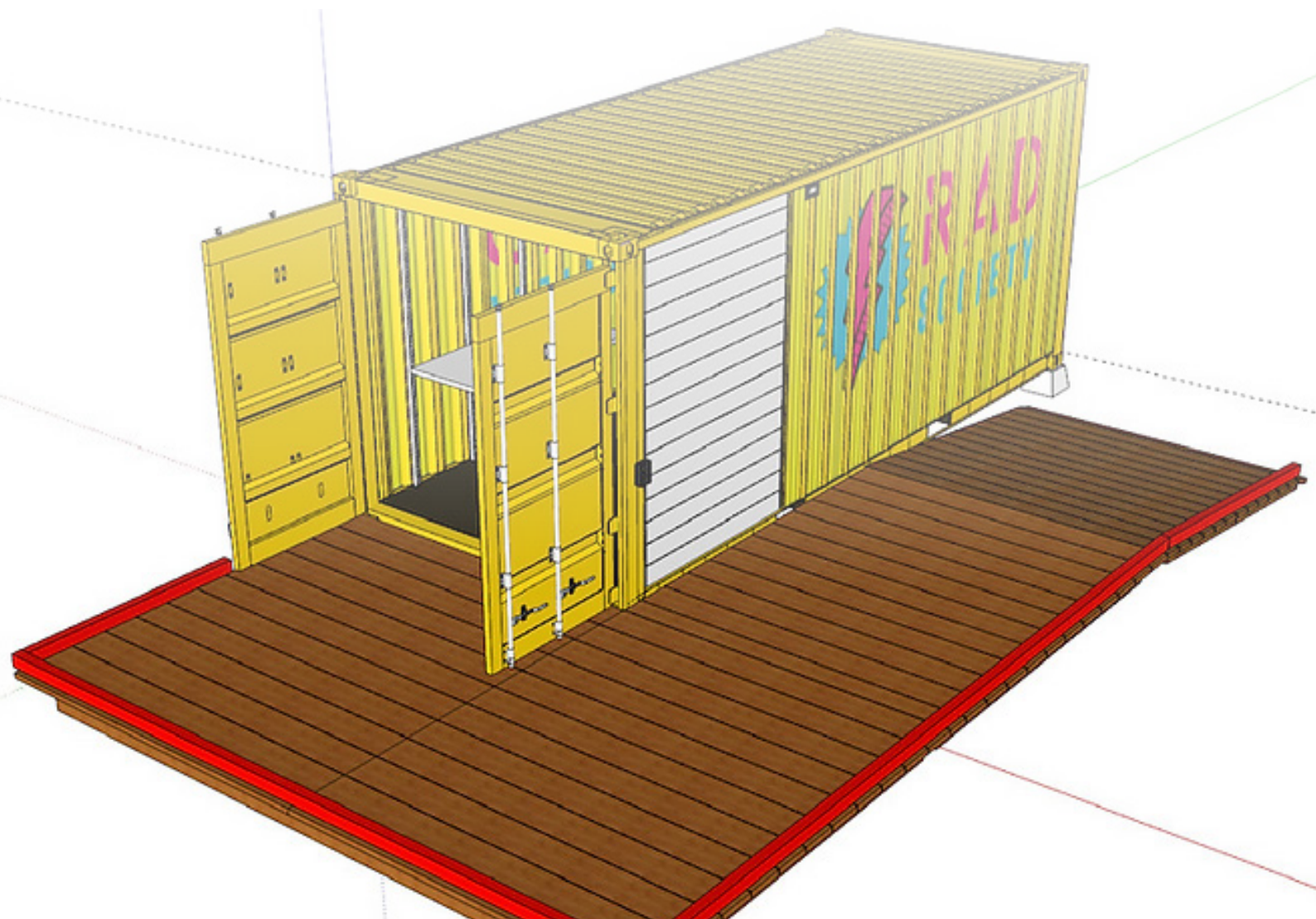
- Install refillable amenities in hotel rooms to reduce single use plastics
- Provide reusable container services in restaurants and cafés
- Purchase durable items with high repairability
- Work with local organizations to redistribute used hotel furniture
- Purchase reconditioned products instead of using products made from virgin resources
- Convert used cooking oil into biodiesel
- Set up clearly-demarcated stations for recycling and compost to divert waste from landfill

Georgia encouraged the audience to take action through conscious consumption, starting a conversation, and learning more. The group split into breakout groups to discuss problematic waste streams in their sectors and the industry in general.

UPDATE RECREATION ADAPTED SOCIETY

SPEAKER: **Tanelle Bolt**, Founder and Executive Director, RAD

Recreation Adapted Society (RAD) is a charity which promotes accessibility in recreational sports for people with physical disabilities. Bolt explained how difficult and expensive it can be to purchase and transport adaptive gear. As a solution, RAD developed Gear Boxes, large shipping containers to store and transport adaptive gear. You can support this initiative by housing these shipping containers in your area, increasing the ability for community members to access adaptive recreational gear.



DOSE OF INNOVATION NAVIGATING “THIRD RAIL” ISSUES

SPEAKER:

Adam Burke, President & CEO
Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board

Adam Burke presented the sustainability initiatives being undertaken by the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board (LA Tourism). The organization began their sustainability planning journey by conducting a resident sentiment survey on tourism. The survey results confirmed the importance of engaging in issues that matter to the community, even if they're outside of the organization's immediate scope.

Burke argued that traditional business models are broken, and LA Tourism wants to reinvent how industries interact with their communities, using the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) as “sustainable tourism goals” in a new-and-improved model. Bringing a diverse array of organizations into their network, LA Tourism and their partners have run several programs including meal programs for unhoused people, group fundraising initiatives and apprenticeships for marginalized community members.

“Everything we do should be about **diversity, equity and inclusion.**”

Burke emphasized that these principles should be present in every decision we make. Humanity was ill-prepared for the shock of COVID-19, and organizations and communities are made more resilient through collaborative, proactive work aimed at foreseeing and addressing the problems of the future.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS PECHA KUCHA

Pecha Kucha means “chit chat” in Japanese. This creative outlet began as nighttime get-togethers in Tokyo in 2003. Inspired by this format, IMPACT’s Pecha Kucha session featured seven speakers with a focus on climate solutions.

SPEAKERS:

Wendy Avis, Vancouver International Airport (YVR)
[YVR’s “Journey to Green”](#)

Mohammed Haj Ali, Air Canada
[Air Canada’s Circular Economy](#)

Andrew Mitchell, GeaZone
[Hydrogen vessels for delivery fleets](#)

Jeff Grant, HTEC
[Hydrogen Technologies offering Transportation Solutions](#)

Joel Marriott and Mary Mason, TOP Carbon Capture Inc.
Carbon capture houses, built and powered by hemp

Susan Blanchet, Origen Air
[Plant-based air purification systems](#)

Jodie Guthrie, Sharc Energy
[Waste, water and heat recovery solutions](#)

DAY 2 KICK-START MAYOR ALTO

Mayor Marianne Alto of Victoria BC launched Day Two of the IMPACT Summit. She welcomed delegates and reinforced the prior day's ideas, encouraging delegates to view visitors as guests and shining light on the differences between traveling to see and traveling to experience. Mayor Alto thanked delegates for contributing to these important discussions, and for supporting Victoria's local economy.



REALITY CHECK

HOW ARE OUR PEOPLE?

SPEAKERS: **Philip Mondor**, President & CEO, Tourism HR Canada
Danielle Suarez, Director of Operations (N. America), Intrepid Travel
Jeff White, VP of Engineering, Marriott Hotels

In this session, Philip Mondor spoke to delegates about the reality of Canada's tourism workforce. In the wake of COVID-19, Canada lost one third of its workforce. Mondor estimates Canadian tourism is still missing 20% of its workforce, or roughly 200,000 employees. The tourism industry has suffered from damage to its reputation. As a result, roughly 60% of the current workforce is looking to transition into other jobs in the next year.

This setback could take up to ten years to correct, and Mondor emphasizes the need for decisive and urgent action. He sees the need to build a supply of workers and to do so, organizations must remove barriers, and offer positions that align with employees' growth, giving opportunities to learn and advance. Employer practices must improve, creating better workplaces so employees want to stay.

He concluded that the value proposition of working in tourism must be better communicated and collaboration must increase, to show the workforce the promise of working in tourism.

After Mondor's reality check on the tourism workforce, delegates heard from Danielle Suarez and Jeff White on how to attract and retain a good team.

Key Takeaways

When attracting new talent, focus on the “why”.

Look at the job description through an employee lens, and ask why someone would want to work for you. Include the story of who your company is and your stance on social and/or environmental issues.

Give staff a reason to join and a reason to stay.

Invest in your people, give them a purpose, show them their trajectory of growth. Provide educational opportunities so they can grow their skills. Suarez suggests holding “stay” interviews, rather than performance reviews. These would show your employees “we value you here, how can we make you stay and help you grow?”

Offer a flexible work environment.

Flexibility is the new normal, allowing employees to build work into their lives, and feel inspired to go to work instead of resentful. Finally, Suarez noted the importance of giving her team as much support as possible, one of the reasons being so that the team can offer a supportive space to their tourism partners in other countries. “How can we help and support you and your business to bounce back?”



DIVE DEEPER BUILDING CAREERS WITH PURPOSE

FACILITATORS: **Kayli Anderson**, Director of Regenerative Tourism, Synergy Enterprises
Philip Mondor, President & CEO, Tourism HR Canada
Danielle Suarez, Director of Operations (N. America), Intrepid Travel
Jeff White, VP of Engineering, Marriott Hotels

Delegates gathered to Dive Deeper on the prior session's content, discussing how to build careers with purpose.

Attendees were asked to share thoughts and questions from the last session:

- Work together to turn consumer marketing capabilities into attracting people to work in the tourism industry. Destination Canada and partners are launching an attraction and retention campaign in April, with toolkits for job seekers, workers, and students; tourism businesses; and intermediaries like educators, career development practitioners, and immigrant service agencies.
- Find a way to include senior citizens in the workforce in a way that doesn't detract from old age pension. Many older community members want to experience the benefits of working, such as connecting with people.
- How do organizations balance promoting from within and diversifying their workforce? The answer is to do both - hire diverse talent and provide them with opportunities to grow into senior positions.
- Post-secondary institutions had 60% international students, however, during the pandemic these programs languished. Currently there's a surge in demand and the institutions are not ready. A reform is happening for post-secondary institutions preparing to respond to increased demand and the required skill sets - and how they can offer workplace integrated learning. There will be more of the employer's footprint in the education system and more of the education footprint in the employer's system.

The facilitators shared questions from Slido and the attendees discussed in groups. The groups' written responses were collected to consolidate ideas.

What have you been doing to make your workplace more inclusive?

- Worked with a consultant to create a DEI survey and begin a process of understanding their employees' needs and how to support them. They are working with individuals to ensure they are serving them in an ongoing process.
- Turned things over to the staff and asked: "How do you want to approach these subjects?". They hold monthly sessions where they can voice their concerns and ask questions. They also have a team event organizing committee to get people involved and use a software called Bamboo HR to easily communicate with team members.
- Accommodate employees with disabilities, and then go above and beyond to offer programs for guests with disabilities. Think about LGBTQ+ employees and help them feel safe/welcome, as well as employees facing discrimination and racism in and out of the workplace
- Apply for government grants available to install accessibility features for employees - these are long-term investments that enable businesses to attract diverse employees.
- Check with employees before every event about dietary requirements and ensure there are adequate options for them, whether they eat plant-based, gluten-free, lactose intolerant, halal, or just really hate a certain ingredient. As well, provide non-alcoholic beverages.
- Training to understand your own biases and have discussions about diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure staff feel safe - provide safety training, hire a security guard, have someone to do the heavy lifting if someone is not comfortable.
- Ensure people know that they can speak up about concerns, regardless of titles. Leaders can create a safe space, then just listen without an immediate response. If it's not supported by leaders, then DEI programs will fail.

RESPONSIBLE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

PANELISTS: **Minto Roy**, Co-Founder, Sugar Sheet Paper/Social Print Paper
Melissa Radu, Director of Social & Env. Sustainability, Explore Edmonton
Zane Buchanan, Creative Manager, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada
Joanna Haugen, Founder, Rooted

In this panel, participants discussed communication methods and how to show your company's value to society.

Key Takeaways

Minto discussed communicating your competitive advantage, such as sustainability. Customers are looking for sustainable options, so organizations must show their passion for sustainability, but also the competitive urgency of why customers need your product.

Marketing can change a narrative, show people what they didn't know and encourage them to learn more, but companies must have authentic actions that move past performative measures. There are many benefits to co-marketing and partnering with other businesses to increase your value propositions

To improve your company's credibility, carry or memorize a quick fact sheet, stats and initiatives you could easily list in conversation, or answers to the top five questions people ask about your business. Roy pointed out that big businesses with more industry control have vested interest in keeping the market unchanged, while small businesses and positive disruption have more hoops to jump through. Storytelling is one advantage that smaller business has, showcasing why your product represents positive change that people will be compelled to support.

Having pledges on your websites for guests to sign can show visitors what the expectations are, such as leave no trace principles, and encourage them to be respectful of your area.

LUNCH & LEARN

SPEAKER: **Milena Nikolova**, Chief Behavior Officer, BehaviorSMART

A recurring theme throughout the IMPACT Summit was attracting guests that align with our sustainable values. Nikolova turned that idea on its head, arguing that it's not about attracting the right traveler, but changing the behaviors of visitors, influencing perspectives and considerations through our presentation of different experiential options.

Nikolova noted that while on vacation, almost everyone is less likely to stick to their sustainability values. Research shows that people will pick the fun experience over the responsible one, lessen their environmental considerations, and forget or intentionally ignore climate issues because they want to unplug and relax on vacation.

“It’s not about our values; it’s about human nature. Smart changes in design can make sustainability effortless and even non-negotiable.”

The solution? Making sustainable tourism effortless for visitors. Make sustainability the default option, for example, by giving people electric cars by default and providing gas-powered vehicles only by request. Make sustainability an irresistible option by making the plant-based food sound better than the meat option. Offer tourists free public transportation so it's pointless to drive. Building sustainability into the design of visitor experiences will turn most travelers into the “right” travelers.



DOSE OF INNOVATION THE ORIGINAL ORIGINAL INDIGENOUS ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

SPEAKER: **Genevieve Huneault**, Development Manager, Indigenous Tourism Canada

This session was intended to help delegates learn more about The Original Original Indigenous Accreditation program.

The Original Original is a framework resource and standard that confirms and validates to tourists they are supporting an authentic Indigenous experience. Huneault discussed recent developments and programs and the three ways a business can be accredited: Business ready, Visitor ready, and Export ready. Delegates then broke out into groups and discussed the prepared guiding questions.



FUNDING THE TRANSITION

MODERATOR: **Heidi Grantner**, General Manager, Synergy Enterprises

PANELISTS: **Angela Nagy**, President & CEO, GreenStep Solutions
GreenStep Eco-Fund

Christine Van Derwill, BMO Radicle
Partnerships Associate - Carbon Credit Development


France Rochette, Bullfrog Power
Director of Sales - Renewable Energy Certificates

Jodie Parmar, Canada Infrastructure Bank
Senior Director - Tourism Related Infrastructure Investments

Angela shared how the GreenStep EcoFund program helps businesses invest in retrofits that save energy, water and waste, and reduce their carbon footprint. Working with GreenStep, businesses build a custom program to charge a small transaction fee, which accumulates and can be used to fund green initiatives.

Christine shared the BMO Radicle's Carbon Credit Development, a program that combines expertise and software to monetize emissions reductions through carbon markets. This program helps tourism businesses of all sizes to tap into incentives to finance EV charging infrastructure and fleet electrification.

As part of the new BC Low Carbon Fuel Requirement (LCFS), businesses that own and operate charging stations for electric vehicle fleets or electric equipment are eligible to generate and monetize carbon credits by displacing diesel or gasoline consumption with electricity. The more electric charging your business provides each year, the more credits you can generate.



France explained Bullfrog Power's services, which act as a pool investment for renewable energy. Companies of any size can purchase renewable energy certificates that offset a company's energy consumption. This flexible, pay-as-you-go option can offset operations without changing suppliers. Larger customers can enter a longer-term commitment at a fixed price.

Bullfrog Power has a strong marketing package to effectively communicate a company's sustainability commitment to customers. Their goal is to make renewable energy more accessible to those that want to make the commitment.

Jodie explained that the Canada Infrastructure Bank is 100% owned by the Government of Canada, with \$35 billion dollars allocated to invest in infrastructure projects that are in the public interest, such as sustainability related infrastructure. For the tourism sector, this relates to public transit, clean energy, wastewater management, electric vehicle charging, high speed internet, and development of sustainable aviation fuel.



REMARKS FROM MINISTER POPHAM

The Honourable Lana Popham, BC's Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport, shared her appreciation of the people in the tourism sector committed to increasing sustainability. She thanked delegates for "keeping the spirit of our communities alive" through the COVID-19 pandemic, and applauded the sector's resilience.

"I am the wind at your back."



DOSE OF INNOVATION BEYOND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SPEAKER: **Greg Hopf**, Owner, Moccasin Trails

“Where did you get your land acknowledgement?”

Many conference speakers started their presentations with a land acknowledgement. Hopf argues that while acknowledging the long-standing Indigenous relationships to the land we occupy is important, it's time to make land acknowledgments truly meaningful by going beyond them and building real relationships with local Indigenous communities. Hopf posed some further questions: “Do you know the Indigenous communities of your area? Do you have a relationship with them? Can you pick up the phone and call them?” What does your supply chain look like? Do you have local Indigenous businesses in your supply chain?

It's time for the next phase: calling, learning, joining community events, and building relationships. Ask yourself: “Do you have a relationship with the local Indigenous nation?”



NORTHERN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN TOURISM: NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

SPEAKERS:

Bobbi Rose Koe, Founder, Dinjii Zhuh Adventures

Teri-Lee Isaac, Owner, Tutchone Tours

Trina Reid, Managing Director, Under the Stump

In this session, delegates heard from three Indigenous female entrepreneurs from the Yukon and Newfoundland. The women shared the origins of their businesses, the obstacles they faced, and what it means to be a female Indigenous entrepreneur in the north.

Koe spoke about how the community has been impacted by the salmon fishing closure in the area, due to intensive commercial fishing pressures throughout Canada and Alaska. She explained the importance of connection to the land, stating “If the land is not healthy, we are not healthy”. She also spoke about the empowering feeling and what it means to work on ancestral land, and her hope to bring more young people back to the land.

When asked what delegates could do to support, the presenters said that most people don’t look into the history of an area and how it has shaped the present. They encouraged delegates to research the Indigenous cultural histories of their destinations before traveling, and supporting Indigenous tour guides and businesses.



DOSE OF INNOVATION REGENERATIVE TOURISM IN IRELAND

SPEAKER: **Paul Kelly**, CEO, Fáilte Ireland

Ireland's economy was once based heavily around harvesting and burning peat to make fuel. Kelly shared how regenerative tourism is facilitating Ireland's transition to a green economy through the story of the midlands.

The midlands region of Ireland holds most of the population. It previously attracted no tourism, and instead depended on fossil fuel production. To attract more people to the midlands, Fáilte Ireland created four distinct regional brands within the country. The midlands were advertised as "off the beaten path", the "undiscovered heartlands" of Ireland. In addition, the organization convened stakeholders and tourism businesses and formed collaborative "clusters". As a result, Ireland now has a massive network of organizations working together to create a strong regenerative tourism economy. Ireland's heartlands are closing down peat power stations and replacing their fossil fuel economy with a "green tourism-based economy".

"Our job as tourism operators is to leverage the opportunities of tourism to benefit Ireland and the community."

UPDATE FROM THE OREGON DELEGATION

SPEAKER: **Scott Bricker**, VP of Destination Development, Travel Oregon

Bricker took the stage enthusiastically and shared his excitement to be at IMPACT 2023. Travel Oregon is focusing on their triple bottom line, prioritizing a balance between experiences, economy and the environment. Bricker emphasized the important messages of IMPACT, and encouraged the collaboration between Oregon and BC tourism.

BIODIVERSITY AND HOPE

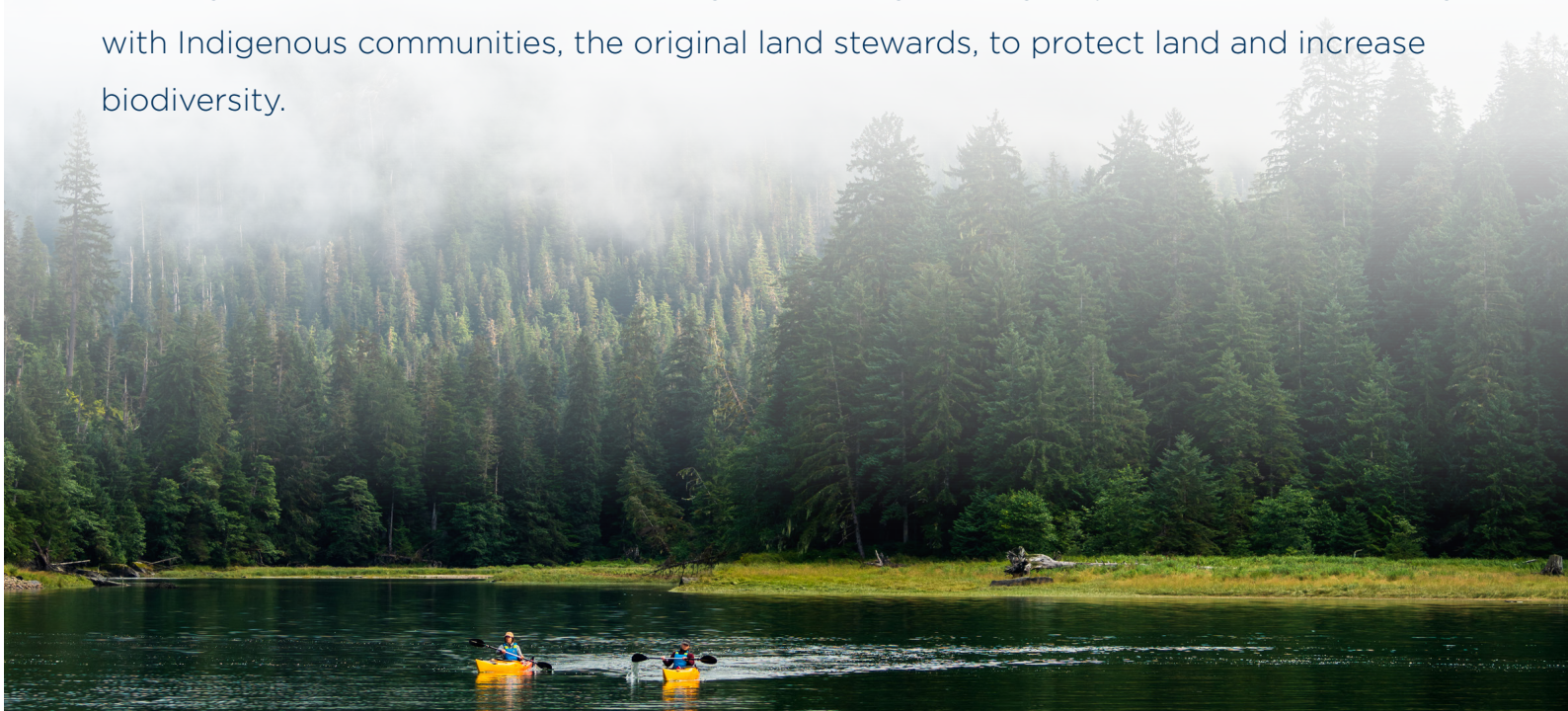
MODERATOR: **Walt Judas**, CEO, Tourism Industry Association of BC

PANELISTS: **Kristen Miskelly**, Owner, Satinflower Nurseries
Eleanor McMahon, President & CEO, Trans Canada Trail
Mathieu Roy, VP & Chief Trail Experience Office, Trans Canada Trail
Nadine Spence, Executive Director of Indigenous Affairs

Walt Judas started this session with an overview of the current state of global biodiversity:

the relative abundance of species has decreased by two thirds in the last 50 years, and there are 1 million species in the world currently endangered. He highlighted COP 15 and the goal to have biodiversity increasing by 2050, but asked the audience if that would be too long to wait.

Panelists discussed their organizations' contributions to biodiversity recovery. The Trans-Canada Trail connects people to nature, and educates visitors on leave no trace principles. Satinflower Nurseries grow and sell native plants on Vancouver Island to replenish endangered species populations, increase local biodiversity and support pollinators. Kristen Miskelly encouraged delegates to consider turning their lawns into native gardens. Parks Canada is working on building the largest parks network, working with Indigenous communities, the original land stewards, to protect land and increase biodiversity.



WE ASKED IMPACT DELEGATES: WHAT ARE YOU COMMITTING TO?

“Slowing down, asking question, approaching relationships as partnerships and taking time to build trust, listen and learn.”

“Cementing sustainability as a community-wide value.”

“Visiting local Indigenous businesses and going on a Songhees tour this summer.”

“Developing a regenerative tourism strategy.”

“Aligning with our allies to find a way forward through tourism.”

“Working with DMOs across BC to build capacity around sustainability and resilience planning: understanding impacts, risks and climate action.”

“Listening hard.”

“Volunteering in my community.”

“Bringing salmon back.”

“Presenting a summary of IMPACT to our regional summit.”

“Looking at sustainability and storytelling through the lens of food and beverage. I commit to get more chefs and food representatives to IMPACT, and having dinner at the table with my family.”

“Building a culture of trust and safety in my team.”

“Working with businesses to make vegan options more available.”

“Implementing a climate action plan.”