



Kathy McRae

Bio:

Katherine MacRae is a tourism professional with over twenty years' experience in the tourism industry. From working in the Caribbean as a dive instructor to remote luxury wilderness lodges, Katherine has a diverse tourism and hospitality background. This experience led Katherine to complete her Master of Arts in Tourism Management at Royal Roads University where she achieved the Founders' Award for Leadership and the Tourism Industry Partnership Award for Leadership.

As the Executive Director for the Commercial Bear Viewing Association (CBVA), Katherine educates the government on the economic viability of the bear viewing industry, the necessity of better wildlife and habitat management practices in British Columbia (BC) and the continued successes for bear viewing operators and guides. With 26 operators and 1000+ trained bear viewing guides, the CBVA sets the standard for bear viewing in BC.

As a tourism professional, Katherine is the President of the Board of Directors for the Wilderness Tourism Association and the Co Chair of the Adventure Tourism Coalition. Both organizations are dedicated to advancing wilderness, adventure, and back country remote tourism in BC.

Session – Advancing Adventure Tourism

An outline of the coalition's work to advance Adventure Tourism for business security and the challenges we face in developing a new policy, working in the backcountry, highlighting the Super, Natural experience our operators offer and educating government on the differences between public and commercial recreation.



Rodney Payne

Bio:

Rodney Payne - Co-founder & CEO of Destination Think!, the leading international consultancy & agency working with the most innovative and progressive destination marketing organizations on the planet. My role affords me the responsibility and privilege of leading a team that has reached the pinnacle of its industry, successfully delivering thousands of branding, strategy, campaign, content marketing & sustainability-related projects for destinations all over the world.

Session – Sustainability as a Driver of Profit

The global travel sector was hit hard by COVID-19 and many businesses and destinations are still recovering. Natural disasters, housing crises, cost of living challenges, and workforce shortages leave our industry facing an uphill battle. It feels tone-deaf to begin talking about sustainability, but Rodney Payne will challenge us to flip that logic on its head. He will show how sustainability, combined with creative business strategy, might be the very thing that can make our economy more resilient, reduce seasonality, help to reduce labor force pressure, and make our destination more competitive and resilient. With inspiring examples from around the world, this presentation will leave us to consider how a focus on yield and profit might be the right approach for our region.



Walt Judas

Bio:

Walt Judas has been involved in the tourism industry for over 30 years, having worked at BC Pavco, Port Metro Vancouver, and Tourism Vancouver prior to joining the Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia (TIABC) in May 2015.

As CEO, Walt leads multiple advocacy/policy files, sets the strategic course for TIABC, builds relationships with members and industry stakeholders, and communicates the value of B.C.'s visitor economy to various constituents.

Before TIABC, Walt spent 15+ years at Tourism Vancouver as Vice President of Marketing Communications, Membership and Sport.

Over the years, Walt has held dozens of board and committee positions. At present, he is on tourism program advisory committees for both Capilano University and Vancouver Community College. He also serves on the City of Vancouver's Sport Hosting Grant Committee. In 2021, he was appointed Chair of the Provincial & Territorial Tourism Industry Association. He was also elected to the board of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada.

Walt has a Bachelor of Hospitality Management Degree from Vancouver Community College, as well as a Diploma in Broadcast Communications Technology from the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

Having visited over 40 countries, Walt loves to travel and especially enjoys visiting communities around British Columbia and other provinces to meet with tourism colleagues. For fun he plays hockey and golf, cycles daily to stay fit, and enjoys spending time with family and friends.

Session – TIABC's Tourism Advocacy Priorities & Town Hall

After a rollercoaster year where some BC destinations set performance records while others lagged because of travel orders, road closures, and/or wildfires, Walt will provide a briefing on the issues that continue to impact BC's visitor economy, and how TIABC and its members/partners are working to address both challenges and opportunities. Walt also wants to hear your feedback on key issues and opportunities facing the tourism industry.



Richard Porges

Bio:

Richard is Destination BC's President and CEO, and previously served as the corporation's Vice President of Corporate Development.

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Session – Collaborating with the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast

Richard Porges will provide an update on Destination BC's projects that support the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Region, including wildfire recovery marketing efforts and more.



Darius Delon

Bio:

Darius is a risk and insurance management consultant, innovator, and longtime contributor to risk management in Canada. He is the current President for the Insurance Institute of Southern Alberta (IISA), the Past-Chair of the RIMS Canada Council (RCC) and the Past-President of the Southern Alberta Risk and Insurance Management Society (SARIMS). In addition, he has been the risk manager for Triovest Realty Advisors, Mount Royal University, the Calgary Board of Education, and the University of Lethbridge. Darius started his career as an insurance adjuster, got into commercial underwriting and became a commercial broker where he retained the pen for his prior insurer. He also earned his Canadian Certified Insurance Broker (CCIB) designation in 1996 when working as a broker.

Darius is one of only 93 Risk and Insurance Management Society - Certified Risk Management Professionals (RIMS-CRMP) in Canada and was part of the team that developed the certified professional concept and criteria. A life-long learner and mentor throughout his career he has taught Insurance and Risk Management for the last 20 years with various organizations including the Insurance Institute of Canada, The University of Calgary, York University (developed the online Risk Finance Course) and Bow Valley College (developed the online CRM curriculum for all three courses).

As a consultant, Darius, and his team, has helped over 330 clients (big and small) manage their insurance and risk issues in the longest insurance hard market in over 20 years.

Session:

Sustainability in your insurance program. Examine your risks, consider new strategies that lead to a better risk profile which leads to a better insurance product and pricing.



Jessica Harcombe Fleming

Bio:

A 20 year marketing and communications veteran with a penchant for issues management, Jess is driven by a passion for storytelling and a curiosity to explore the intersection of digital communications, media relations and content marketing.

Her career has spanned roles with leading brands and destinations in Canada, the US and overseas.

With a focus on business growth and building brand trust, she lead's with a solutions-based approach to help client's reputations shine. Her long-standing media relationships, 360-degree approach to issues management and crisis communication, creativity and ability to see creative opportunities has led clients down the path of success. Her superpower is taking a holistic look at paid, earned, and owned channels to then recommend and implement intentional and effective strategies to reach clear measures of performance.

Sector experience includes travel, tourism, and destination marketing; the outdoor and ski industries; Indigenous Relations; B2B; Retail; Government; CPG; Wine and Spirits; Oil and Gas; Health Sciences; Transportation; Real Estate and non-profit. She excels at delivering Crisis Communications Strategies and Media Training for leading brands across Canada and is currently completing her Incident Command System Certification.

Session:

In an age of real-time social media and citizen journalism, news can travel at lightspeed. When disaster strikes, there is not always time to control the message or prepare a thoughtful and strategic response. By planning ahead for potential issues that could impact business reputation or continuity, you'll gain confidence and comfort in knowing you have a plan in place. This session will introduce best practices in communicating during issues and crisis, setting you up for success when the unforeseen occurs.



Cheryl Chapman

Bio:

Cheryl is a member of the Xat'sūll First Nation. With over 30 years of experience working with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, communities, businesses, and all levels of government. Cheryl excels at capacity building, sustainable community development, and building mutually beneficial relationships.

Cheryl recognizes the need and opportunities to create meaningful relationships through respectful communication and truth telling. Her passion is education through tourism and she continuously seizes every opportunity to share her ancestral stories, which are based in cultural values and experiences.

Cheryl has been an invaluable member of the Indigenous Tourism team in a number of capacities from Training & Product Development Coordinator to Secretary of the Board, always with a passion for the respectful development and delivery of world class Indigenous Tourism offerings. From facilitating personal and career development programs which bring forward personal truths for inclusion of individual, community and corporate values that enhance the knowledge and understanding of all participants, to sharing the experience through storytelling.

Session:

Develop and strengthen the understanding of what the value of tourism means to First Nations, our cultures and in the regional, provincial, and international landscapes.



Wendy Magnes

Bio:

With 30 years of tourism marketing, destination management and industry development experience at the local, regional, provincial and international levels, Wendy has worked for organizations such as BC Parks, Destination BC / Tourism BC, BC Ferries, Tourism Victoria, Chambers of Commerce (Kamloops and Revelstoke), two BC tourism regions (former High Country Region and Tourism Vancouver Island) and for the Walt Disney Company. In other parts of the BC Government, Wendy has had roles leading international trade marketing and brand management as well as developing the StrongerBC: Economic Plan as part of the Ministry of Jobs, Economic Recovery, and Innovation.

Wendy joined the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport in May 2022, and currently has oversight for Crown corporate reporting for Destination BC and the B.C. Pavilion Corporation (BC Place and the Vancouver Convention Centre), industry economic data and research, Federal Provincial and Territorial tables for Tourism as well as several key industry initiatives including emergency management. Wendy's passion for emergency management has grown from her direct involvement over 12 years supporting the B.C. tourism industry during such events as the BC Ferries Queen of the North sinking, Mount Polley mine tailings pond breach, and the 2017 and 2018 wildfires. Wendy has been invited to speak at various industry conferences on the topic of B.C.'s tourism emergency management plans including as keynote speaker at the Digital Tourism Think Tank in Brussels in 2016. As a lifelong learner, Wendy has complemented her interest in emergency management with several related courses from the Justice Institute of BC.

Wendy also has a Master of Arts in Tourism Management from Royal Roads University coupled with a Diploma in Special Events and Convention Management from Thompson Rivers University. As a strong advocate for greater synergies between academia and industry, Wendy has lent her voice to Advisory Councils for Royal Roads University and Camosun College School of Business Marketing Department.

Recognized for negotiating innovative solutions for strategic marketing, industry development, integrated policy, and IT system infrastructure projects, Wendy also is known for establishing enduring partnerships and establishing critical operational linkages between key stakeholders and organizations across BC and other jurisdictions.

Session:

The BC Tourism Emergency Management Framework provides a unified structure to support tourism partners and visitors on matters related to the four pillars of emergency management; namely, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Join this conversation with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport and Ministry, Emergency Management Climate Readiness and learn what is in the works to better support the tourism industry and how you can be involved.



Noah Snell

Bio:

Noah has five years experience in various functional and operational roles with emergency management agencies. As the Manager of Provincial Planning for EMCR (B.C. Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness), his mandate includes creating and updating provincial plans under the B.C. Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), as well as providing planning support and guidance for communities, provincial Ministries, and other agencies. Noah believes in the importance of planning to support effective disaster risk reduction and to reduce impacts when hazards cannot be completely mitigated. Prior to his involvement with EMCR, Noah worked at the Canadian Red Cross, where he supported people mobilization and management in emergencies, disaster risk reduction programs, and emergency operations for about four years.

Session:

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Kelsey Millman

Bio:

Driven by a deep-rooted passion to support BC's tourism and hospitality sector, Kelsey is a trusted resource and tireless advocate for the industry as Communications Manager for the BC Hotel Association (BCHA). With over a decade of industry experience, Kelsey utilizes her portfolio of communications skills to facilitate positive change for the sector, specializing in media and public relations, communications strategies, crisis management, government relations, social media, branding, and event management.

Prior to joining the BCHA, Kelsey oversaw communications activities for her clients at leading integrated communications agencies, tartanbond and Avenue PR, where she represented internationally recognized hotel and tourism brands such as JW Marriott Parq Vancouver; the DOUGLAS, an Autograph Collection Hotel; Pan Pacific Whistler; The Josie, an Autograph Collection Hotel; Pacific Sands Beach Resort; Watermark Beach Resort; The Adventure Group; and Inn at Laurel Point, among others.

Kelsey completed the public relations program at BCIT, with honours, and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Cultural Studies at the UBC. Having studied intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression, Kelsey is devoted to building a safe and equitable hospitality sector that is welcoming to all.

In her spare time, Kelsey enjoys exploring Vancouver via her cruiser bike, travelling to new destinations across the globe, and is a RuPaul Drag Race superfan.

Session:

Join us as the BC Hotel Association unveils its latest advocacy efforts, success stories, and future plans, all aimed at boosting the accommodation community. Dive into the dynamic landscape of resources, education, and programs available to accommodators in BC. Discover how these essential tools can empower you to thrive in today's ever-changing industry.



Nick Grant