



NEWS RELEASE

Tourism Industry Gathers in Victoria Looking to Build on Record-setting Results

Victoria, B.C. - February 20, 2017 – Hundreds of tourism operators, destination marketing organizations and sector associations will meet over the course of three days (Feb. 22-24) as the BC Tourism Industry Conference kicks off in Victoria this week.

Hosted by the Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC), the annual conference began over 20 years ago to bring delegates together to learn, develop business relationships, tackle issues and celebrate success, the latter of which is a big part of this year's event.

"In most regions of the province, tourism has set new records for revenues, visitation and other key measures three years running," said TIABC Board Chair Jim Humphrey. "British Columbia's visitor economy stands on its own as one of the province's leading business sectors. At some \$15+ billion in revenue, we know that BC Tourism matters."

The conference opens on Wednesday, February 22nd with TIABC's Town Hall where the organization will update delegates on its tourism advocacy efforts and facilitate a discussion with industry leaders on the challenges and opportunities facing the industry. Following the Town Hall, post-secondary student winners of regional showdowns will demonstrate their strategic thinking and presentation skills to a live industry audience to determine the ultimate winner of *The Winning Pitch* competition. The opening reception follows at the Songhees Wellness Centre to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Aboriginal Tourism B.C.

Other conference highlights include a keynote presentation by social media maven Sunny Lenarduzzi who was named one of BC Business Magazine's *Top 30 Under 30* leaders. Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training, will also address delegates at lunch on Thursday.

Conference delegates will choose from several concurrent workshops designed to reflect various components of the #BCTourismMatters theme. Topics include wine and culinary tourism, film tourism, reporting economic impact, recruitment solutions, BC's Ale Trail, emergency planning, event marketing, the future of YVR, adventure travel, working with local First Nations and social media. The conference closes with a special presentation by Toronto-based storyteller Jowi Taylor whose acoustic guitar was constructed from over 60 pieces of Canadian history including the late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's canoe paddle. Jowi's presentation will culminate in a special performance by legendary blues artist Jim Byrnes.

The Tourism Industry Association of BC (TIABC) advocates for the interests of British Columbia's \$15+ billion tourism economy. As a not-for-profit tourism industry association, TIABC works collaboratively with its members - private sector tourism businesses, industry associations and destination marketing organizations - to ensure the best working environment for a competitive tourism industry.

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