

## Session 4: Tourism

Session Moderator: Nicolisa Blatchford

Location: TBC

Date/Time: Tuesday, December 13, 10:30 am to 12:15 pm

- [Yihang Zhang](#) - Oil & Vinegar? Exploring relationships between nature-based tourism and virtual experiences in the UNESCO Global Geopark in Tumbler Ridge, BC
- [Joe Pavelka](#) - Tourism & Parks: What's the Problem?
- [Brooklyn Rushton](#) - Gaining Insight on the Most Challenging Expedition: Climate Change from the Perspective of Canadian Mountain Guides
- [Elizabeth Halpenny](#) - Effective environmental communications in nature-based tourism contexts

### Yihang Zhang

University of Northern British Columbia

#### **Oil & Vinegar? Exploring relationships between nature-based tourism and virtual experiences in the UNESCO Global Geopark in Tumbler Ridge, BC**

##### **Abstract:**

Accessibility affects visitation, park use, and park enjoyment, across demographics. It is also a key local issue, particularly with active populations “aging in place”. Both visitor and local accessibility challenges exist in Tumbler Ridge, BC—home of Canada’s UNESCO Geopark. Despite boasting an impressive number of trails across many skill/difficulty levels, accessibility remains out of reach, even at some of the least demanding trails. In 2022, we worked with research partners The Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation, and the Tumbler Ridge Global UNESCO Geopark to design and administer a visitor survey. It included opportunities for comment on accessibility, and also featured questions on virtual tourism experiences—tools for augmenting and enhancing access. In July and August, and surveyed 384 visitors at multiple sites including the Geopark Visitor Center, Tumbler Ridge Museum, trailheads, hotels and campgrounds, restaurants, and small businesses. We begin this paper with core concepts about parks, accessibility, and virtual tourism experiences. We then discuss patterns in the 2022 visitation survey data, as well as notable participant reactions to questions about virtual tourism. We offer suggestions about what such strong reactions might mean. We end with preliminary recommendations about blending virtual and outdoor experiences to enhance visitor experiences and satisfaction.

**Contributors:**

- Dr. Zoë A. Meletis (co-presenter), University of Northern British Columbia
- Zena Conlin, Tumbler Ridge Museum Foundation
- Manda Maggs, Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Global Geopark

**Acknowledgements:**

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**Joe Pavelka**

Mount Royal University

**Tourism & Parks: What's the Problem?****Abstract:**

Tourism and parks occupy a long relationship that is both beneficial and highly contested. The dominant characterization of this relationship is that of reluctant approval and tolerance by parks of tourism. There are numerous objective reasons and examples of tourism working well or 'doing good' in parks and of how it denigrates the land and the park experience. However, media and others tend to portray parks tourism as negative and with a strong focus on the 'other' that is, the tourist is the problem. There are many examples of the 'stupid tourist' in media that receive wide coverage. This session is based on addressing the question of tourism and parks, what is the problem? Is it the tourist? Is it the parks? Is the relationship fundamentally flawed? It will interrogate this relationship with a focus on the realities of the tourism and parks. It will examine aspects of privilege, biases and resource knowledge that may affect the way parks views tourism. This session

is important for two reasons; it should open the door to a long overdue discourse on parks and tourism and should shed light on aspects of parks' access and equity. This session is relevant to all attendees.

**Brooklyn Rushton**

Wilfred Laurier University

### **Gaining Insight on the Most Challenging Expedition: Climate Change from the Perspective of Canadian Mountain Guides**

#### **Abstract:**

Nature based tourism (NBT) is becoming increasingly popular, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic as people began to seek activities in nature to enhance well-being after long periods of isolation. Accompanying the projected increase in NBT demand in a post COVID-19 era are increasing challenges with climate change, particularly in mountain regions that offer tourism activities. However, there is limited local knowledge documented to date from those who are intricately involved in NBT in mountain regions and have experienced the impacts of climate change firsthand. Recognizing this gap, this research is the first to present the intimate knowledge of mountain guides in Canada, offering novel insight into climate change risks and opportunities for NBT in mountain regions, including strategies to contend with climate change risks and adaptation. From an online survey, 99% of guides indicated that they have witnessed changes in glacial coverage, slope instability, and access to established guiding routes, as well as an increased incidence of forest fires, extreme weather events, flooding, and rockfall over the course of their career. Due to the adaptive nature of guides, many have already implemented strategies to adapt to the impact of climate change, including increasing flexibility in route choice and timing, diversifying activities, and enhancing readiness for dealing with an increase in mountain hazards. Findings presented in this presentation offer practical knowledge for mountain-based tourism organizations to help plan for a future threatened with rapid climatic change.

#### **Contributors:**

Michelle Rutty, University of Waterloo

#### **Acknowledgements:**

Thank you to the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides for sharing the survey with their members.

Elizabeth Halpenny

University of Alberta

## **Effective environmental communications in nature-based tourism context**

### **Abstract:**

Nature based tourism contexts such as parks, and wildlife watching boat tours, are free-choice learning environments where visitors can be inspired to act in a more environmentally responsible manner, both at the destination but also after their return home. However, much still needs to be studied to understand what interventions work, how, and why. This abstract reports on findings of a systematic review that examined the efficacy of environmental communications designed to encourage pro-environmental behaviour. Research objectives included: (1) document patterns in research design, including frequency and type of methods, methodology, and theoretical perspectives used; (2) report on the geographic distribution and temporal trends of studies; and, (3) identify approaches to documenting pro-environmental intentions and behaviours arising from nature-based tourism environment communications programs.

### **Contributors:**

- Mu He, University of Alberta
- C.J. Blye, University of Alberta

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