

# Canadian Alliance of Land Trusts Summit

October 24, 2022

**Host: Renata Woodward (RW)**

**Keynote speaker: Meg Beckel (MB)**

**RW:** I am pleased to welcome Meg Beckel who has dedicated most of her career to lead the Canadian Museum of Nature. Prior to joining the Museum, Meg was Vice-President of the External Relations at the University of Waterloo, Chief Operating Officer of the Royal Ontario Museum and Executive Director of External Relations at the University of Victoria. Meg remains engaged in the community as an observer of the *International Union for Conservation of Nature* board, as past chair of the *International Women's Forum* Ottawa Chapter and as a member of the Philanthropy Committee for the Canadian Canoe Museum, still putting her BA in political science and her MBA to good use. "Everyone has a role to play in understanding and tackling climate change and biodiversity loss. I think must be both courageous and collaborative to have lasting impact. To that end, natural history museum and nature conservation organizations have an opportunity and an obligation to step up and play a more vital role."

It is an honor to have Meg here as a Keynote at the summit of the Canadian land trusts who will speak about A Nation for Nature: **Relevance, Collaboration and Connection.**

Welcome Meg, you are looking at a room full of naturalists and land trust practitioners who are excited about protecting land, habitat, and species. When people speak about museums, the image usually represents beautiful buildings with exhibitions and learning opportunities but please tell us, what does natural history museum encompass and how relevant is it to the work of land trusts?

**MB:** Museums are 19<sup>th</sup> century tools operating in a 21<sup>st</sup> century global context

Many natural history museums were created in the late 18th century. Each one formed with an important mandate to inspire respect and understanding of the natural world. While the purpose hasn't changed, the world around us has.

In this century, nature is more important and more challenged than ever. In some ways it is more accessible and in others, more daunting and remote. And it's now the focus of a multitude of international organizations and groups all of whom share an interest in its possibilities. No longer just a place, nature is an experience that is both intensely private and vitally public. More than ever, we need to inform a shared understanding.

More need, more opportunity, more players, more reasons to build a new respect and understanding, in new ways never imagined.

We believe that this new world means a vital future for natural history museums where we are focussed on a global mission that we share with NGOs around the world ... to save the world for future generations with Evidence, Knowledge, and Inspiration.

At the highest level, the mission of natural history museums around the world is nothing less than to support making the vision of a sustainable natural future a reality. As current trends of climate change, habitat loss, mass species extinctions, and their causal factors run counter to this vision, the museum's mission is one of inspiring change. Natural History Museums are an instrument, one of many working in concert within the scientific community, for providing the foundation required to foster the change required to "save the world". It is a foundation built on evidence, knowledge, and inspiration, which are the mainstays of our work.

Evidence: the collection

Knowledge: scientific research in the field and the lab

Inspiration: to inspire, inform and influence

With programs and activities that deliver:

Relevance, collaboration, connection.

Land Trusts are very similar. The land holds the evidence and provides a platform for creating knowledge about the bio and geo diversity of this country. And Land Trusts need public support which can only be earned by building understanding and respect for nature and the desire for a sustainable natural future. This is where relevance comes in.

The work of both Museums and Land Trusts must be Relevant to the audiences we seek to inform, inspire, influence and support. Public, government, industry, Indigenous partners, NGOs. All are key to a sustainable natural future.

**RW:** As a land trust practitioner, I had the privilege to collaborate with New Brunswick Museum on many projects such as data and specimen collection, species identification, and BioBlitz. I even managed to unload whole room of handwritten field notes to them which were impossible for me to process but treasure for the museum. Please tell us more about the data or evidence that the museums collect and how it contributes to conservation.

**MB:** I will start by talking about museum knowledge creation through scientific research in the field, in the lab and in collaboration with museums, government, universities and Indigenous partners. For example, recent work with the Government of Nunavut to inform a proposal to create Arviat Park. Biodiversity mapping was needed to inform the decision about a new park. Fieldwork collected the evidence of the biodiversity of the area. Lab work identified and described species and noted species locality past, present, and potential future, AND identified

new species. Noting changes in locality can demonstrate change over time and space which is evidence of the impact of climate change on an ecosystem. This knowledge can inform conservation decisions. Our challenge is getting this knowledge into the hands of decision makers.

Land Trusts could be partners in this work by providing access to land that has yet to be fully mapped from a biodiversity and geodiversity perspective.

**RW:** It is incredible to know the quantity and quality of data that museums collect. Can you please describe what does this data translates to?

**MB:** The Evidence collected and stored in museum collections is shared with the world through specimen loans, it is digitized and published on the museum website and on the Global Biodiversity Information Facility and it is referenced in publications by scientists all over the world.

Land Trusts could collect and share specimen data with regional natural history museums to ensure we have a record of the bio and geo diversity of this country. A critical baseline of knowledge to guide planning and decision making.

**RW:** You have described the relevance, data and knowledge importance but how do you add the human component into this. How do you share all this knowledge and how do you inspire people to protect the precious nature around themselves.

**MB:** This is where inspiration steps up through public programming (exhibits, schools, rentals), informing public policy (nature Ideas, Ignite, Science Review), Scientific training, Science Communications for industry, government, collaborators.

It is the museum's hope that public programming will inspire understanding and respect for nature so that people choose to live in balance with nature and make decisions that protect nature for a sustainable natural future for us all.

**RW:** One of the partnership projects that I had a chance to participate in was the conservation on canvas projects with nature trust which was once again partnership project between the nature trust and the New Brunswick Museum and a local artist Michael McEwing who painted many of the land trusts nature preserves. These paintings were exhibited across New Brunswick and attracted many different demographics to the work of the land trust. It was such a wonderful collaborative project inspiring people.

Please tell us how do you see potential collaboration between the land trusts and museums to advance conservation on regional, provincial, national, and international level?

**MB:** Let me use the lens of Relevance, Collaboration, Connection

Relevance: we all need to be relentlessly relevant by contextualizing our story into the issues that matter to our audiences. Land Trusts are key to protecting biodiversity and geodiversity that is part of the global calculation for a sustainable planet. That calculation must also be regional and local to be relevant to those who we need to support the land trusts. Sharing your knowledge through public programs or school programs at a regional natural history museum could inform and inspire audiences while also providing content to the museum that they might not have the resources to create themselves.

Collaboration: making the data and evidence housed within the land trust available to others, can help demonstrate the long-term value of protecting the land. Also .. land trusts like museums can play a role as a convenor of like-minded organizations as well as those who we wish to inspire and influence. We must continue to leverage our networks and those of our collaborators so that we are not ONLY speaking to the choir. A land trust could convene a summit in collaboration with a natural history museum and a Canadian member of the IUCN, to share knowledge derived from the evidence in the land you hold in trust.

Connection: local, national, and global connection with collaborators and with decision makers, policy makers, industry, and major global forums such as COP for climate and COP for biodiversity and IUCN are key to making the work and value of land trusts KNOWN while also playing an even more vital role in our global mission to save the world for future generations. Connection makes collaboration possible. Collaboration makes our work more relevant as it connects more dots in the overall story and connects more people to the conservation mission. Connection needs to be intentional such as the Museum's NIA program that celebrates and connects with individuals, NGOs and business engaged in nature connection and conservation.

We are in this together and we need to leverage our respective mandates and assets by being relentlessly relevant, courageously collaborative, and creatively connected.

What we do matters.

A Nation for Nature: relevance, collaboration, and connection