

REPORT ON ALTCON2019: ALTERNATIVE CONFERENCE FOR EMERGING ARTS & CULTURE PROFESSIONALS

The following is a brief synopsis of the event and the information gathered.

PROGRAM SYNOPSIS:

Identifying a need, the Alternative Conference for Emerging Arts & Culture Professionals (AltCon2019) uses stimulating content to empower and equip a bold next-generation of cultural sector professionals, instilling confidence, honing skill sets, and charting a clear path to achieving goals. Once equipped, they will inspire new thinking and blaze new trails in the cultural sector. AltCon2019 breaks the paradigm of traditional conference norms, allowing professionals to explore meaningful networking and learning from their peers in a variety of session styles and topics at a reasonable fee. The conference focused on the idea of branding, leadership and advocacy.

MODULE TOPICS:

Keynote Address: The Things I have learned about Life and Leadership (Meg Beckel, President & CEO, Canadian Museum of Nature)

Keynote addressed the importance of identifying the values and characteristics of your organization. Values define who you are. Character attributes guide what you do, and how you do it. Understanding these is key towards a successful organization. Meg will share what she has learned about life and leadership based on her own experiences, and those of people who have inspired, coached and critiqued her over time. The goal of the session is for each participant to have written down what they believe are the core values and character attributes that define their institution.

Session: Cultural Creativity: Access, Experience and Engagement (Connie MacDonald, VP Programs, Events & Commercial Services, Royal Ontario Museum)

Session taught how to use programs, events and commercial enterprise to engage with diverse audiences, provide meaningful access and enhanced visitor experience at your museum. Institutions exchanged and shared their own exciting engagement ideas, and brainstormed solutions for each other's sites

Session: A Guide to Innovating from the Middle (Mimosa Kabir, Manager, Individual Giving, CIFAR)

This session posits that we are living in a time of rapid change, and that our ability to thrive depends on our capacity to adapt, collaborate and innovate. This session sought to provide participants with the tools necessary to become a successful change maker at your institution. It discussed Intrapreneurship, and how to innovate by solving problems.

Panel: Various Other Duties: Adventures in Small Museum Management (Kate Butler – Haliburton Highlands Museum, Will Hollingshed – M.S. Norgoma, Amy Klassen – Niagara Historical Society & Museum, Meredith Leonard – Halton Region Heritage Services)

This session looked at the world of small museums and the daily activities that they complete, including grant writing, children's programs, meetings with community partners, accession processing, website development, and cleaning. The session talked about the huge value to be

found in the culture of small organizations, and how one learns to do it all, often on a shoestring budget. This session advocated for small museum work, looked at the variety of tasks involved, as well as explored lessons learned along the way.

Keynote Address: Kevin Murphy (President, Murphy Hospitality Group)

Kevin Murphy discussed memorable moments throughout his 38 year journey creating Murphy Hospitality Group (MHG), including the business history from its beginnings to how they continue to grow across the Maritimes. MHG corporate culture and core values were featured heavily in the story, with their guiding principle of “creating memorable experiences” acting as the driving force that continues to make MHG a hospital industry leader. Kevin talked about the importance of celebrating your team and your successes, and remembering to give back to the community.

Session: Your Brand Matters (Adam Roth, Branch Manager RBC)

In this session participants were given an opportunity to identify and build your organization’s brand. This session included a number of exercises to help build and establish a brand, and also looked at how we market and advertise ourselves, as well as pitfalls to avoid.

Session: Stories we tell: Self-advocacy in Art & Culture (Zev Farber, Director, Centre for Emerging Artists & Designers, OCAD University)

This session looked at the importance of advocacy within the arts and culture sector, and explored a variety of approaches to developing the key skills required to convey what your organization has to offer.

OUTCOMES FROM CONFERENCE:

- Made many connections with other museum professional from around Ontario and Canada
- Gained insight into creative ways to engage your colleagues and community in ideas and experiences
- Developed ideas for new programs and fundraisers as a result of attending

GENERAL INSIGHTS FROM CONFERENCE:

- The digital frontier is where museums are heading
- Focus on moments and experiences – that is what people remember
- Think of the experience from the perspective of the visitor
- Use your unique cultural creativity to create a backdrop for stakeholders, which opens you up to revenue streams