Welcome to the latest edition of SITElines

June 1, 2015

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President’s Message

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” – Aristotle

Hayley Bishop, CMP

Force Majeure

Amidst a busy spring, filled with travel, I find myself simultaneously feeling very lucky and profoundly affected by the earthquakes in Nepal – sudden, devastating, incomprehensible disasters.

Some SITE members among us have had to reroute programs and work around the clock to ensure the safety of our clients. Others have painfully awaited news of loved ones’ rescues while the rest of us are reeling from news that can never be understood.

In its senselessness, tragedy transforms us. There are certain pivotal events that inspire camaraderie and rebuilding. A collective instinct to help. Togetherness can come from fractured realities. And sometimes, something serves as a stark reminder to embrace our communities, to create moments, and to find meaning in our world.

With good intention, we write Force Majeure clauses into our contracts to serve as protection

The sold-out SITE Social: a great evening to support our chapter and the Rainbow Songs Foundation
against the unpreventable outcomes that we hope will never manifest. Contingency and risk management plans are thoroughly designed, with every possible wrong that may befall our participants proactively considered. Until the unimaginable happens.

As humans, we sometimes believe that we can control our surroundings, until a force bigger than us reminds us with such furor – or majesty – that we are, in fact, minuscule parts of something immeasurably larger. We are microcosms of our surroundings. Perhaps you have felt that ratio in the most amazing way when ascending the peak of a mountain, or when viewing the magnitude of the rock formation from the valley below. The ocean, spanning as far as the eye can see, the endless desert, or the infinitely starry sky above may bring awe and perspective together.

Many of us circle the globe to design memories for others, capturing our own treasures along the way. We are the sculptors of motivational experiences. We are collectively able to support tourism in growing economies and in nations where they rely on it. We also have the potential to find ways to give back to the communities that we visit by building CSR initiatives into our plans. All while attempting, to the best of our ability, to manage the safety of our participants.

I am proud to be a SITE Canada member and thankful to have been born into a privileged place in this world. But, I also know that I am no more deserving than anyone else. We are all borrowing our footprints from future generations, and it sometimes becomes apparent that we should step forward with purpose and strive for excellence. These opportunities define us.

Let’s be exceptional colleagues, friends and neighbours and continue exploring our planet, together, spreading kindness, building relationships, and connecting meaningfully. I encourage everyone to reach out, near and far, to convey gratitude, support and love. For what, really, are we doing if not leaving marks on each other’s lives?

SITE Global Conference

SITE Canada Educational Scholarship 2015

Dreaming of Indian adventures at the SITE Global conference this year? Well—get busy and apply for a SITE Canada scholarship to realize that trip to New Delhi. Two scholarships are available for up to a maximum of $3,000.00 to help defray costs for attending the conference.

There are of course, some caveats. You must be a SITE member in good standing, you’ll have to write an essay on how your SITE membership is a benefit to you and why you want to go to the Global Conference. You will also have to file a report about your travels to India and the conference that will be featured in a future issue of SITElines. The deadline for submission for an educational scholarship is Friday July 3, 2015. GET ON IT!
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June 1, 2015

2015 SITE Canada Social

by Jennifer Moir, CMP

Canada Meet Week is always a favourite time of the year, where we are able to reconnect with our oldest and dearest industry friends as well as meet wonderful new friends. SITE Canada is thrilled to host one of the pillar events for Canada Meet Week, the Spring Social. This year we welcomed 250 of our peers to the Liberty Grand, Governor’s room and celebrated a Journey through the Ages through music.

The event is not complete of course without a fantastic reception hour for our guests to network, browse the silent auction tables, try their luck at the raffle prize, enjoy delicious passed hors d’oeuvres and a drink. Following the reception, guests were invited to be seated for a gourmet three-course meal with an endless pour of table wine, and the event concluded with our always popular live auction featuring four amazing trips.

A portion of our Auction and Raffle proceeds will benefit our chosen charity for the evening—Rainbow Songs Foundation—as well as the SITE Canada Educational Reserve Fund (ERF).

We are very grateful for all of the helping hands that make this event a success; we truly could not do it without you!

Thank you to our Social Committee event volunteers, Gina Tsirmpas of Hard Rock Hotels All Inclusive Collection, Christy Wright, and Onika Dainty.

Thank you to our event sponsors, Title Sponsor Hard Rock Hotels All Inclusive Collection; Reception Sponsor Tropical Incentives DMC; Venue Sponsor Liberty Entertainment Group; our Table Wine Sponsors Ravine Vineyard Estates Winery and Trius Winery at Hillebrand; and our Auctioneer; Toronto Event Auctioneers.

A huge THANK YOU to all of our industry friends that graciously donated to our silent and live auctions and raffles.

Rainbow Songs Foundation

Rainbow Songs Foundation (RSF) is a charitable organization that provides high-quality, interactive music programs free of cost to families with young children using shelter services in the GTA.

Established in 2007, RSF has grown each year, offering more weekly music classes and working with a larger number of shelters. We know that music nurtures the soul and research shows that music education provides real and lasting cognitive benefits to children and youth. By giving parents the skills and tools to make music with their children, RSF seeks to make a real difference in families’ lives today and in the future.

SITE Canada provided the opportunity for RSF to receive a portion of the auction proceeds from the 2015 Spring Social. This generous notion resulted in a donation to RSF of $5300! RSF is pleased to announce that this funding will support an entire year of RSF weekly programs at one of our partner shelters in the GTA. Music makes a difference, and YOU have made it possible!

Thank you SITE Canada!

Rainbow Songs Foundation
Navigating the waters of a cruise option for an incentive program became clearer after the comprehensive presentation by Freddy Muller at the May chapter meeting.

Setting a course for the seven seas, SITE Canada welcomed members and guests to the newly opened Oliver & Bonacini Aperture event space on Yonge Street to network, enjoy a delicious dinner served up by Oliver & Bonacini Catering, and gain valuable insight on how to present cruising as an incentive option for groups.

Muller is the director, corporate, incentive and charter sales for Prestige Cruise Holdings Inc., which includes Norwegian Cruise Lines, Oceania Cruises, and Regent Seven Seas Cruises. A 20-year veteran of the cruise scene, he said cruising will appeal to most, but not all groups.

He detailed the latest industry stats from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA). Cruising in 2014, handled 21 million passengers, offered a global fleet of 410 ships with most programs travelling to the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Europe and a mixture of South American and Asian markets.

Top on the list of advantages for a cruise option is the enhanced camaraderie and self-contained environment a cruise offers groups. It allows for enhanced face-to-face time with senior executives and company staff. Of course, multiple destinations and dining options as well as built-in activities and entertainment options also complement the experience. Muller showcased a helpful chart that compared a cruise line vs. hotel stay to help planners grasp the different cruise segments and how they present to different incentive options. The Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn and Silversea lines were compared to the Four Seasons, Ritz Carlton and St. Regis hotel brands for instance.

Muller also explained the inner workings of cruise quotes. Cruise rates are per passenger, programs are 100 per cent pre-paid in advance, and the concept of “single rooms” is limited. Muller explained that key components of cruise specific RFPs can include: preferred embarkation and disembarkation ports, acceptable range of dates, acceptable number of days and function expectations.

Lastly, he offered a few suggestions on how to present a cruise to upper management. He told SITE members to highlight cost containment and budget control, emphasize the wide range of cruising destinations rich in history and cultural experiences, and to underscore the heightened sense of camaraderie associated with sea voyages.
A meeting with John Crowe at Metracon had a happy consequence for visiting SITE Spain chapter member Celia Laguillo, sales manager for the Westin Palace in Madrid and her colleague Laia Climent, sales manager for the W Barcelona. Both were in Toronto for sales meetings and Crowe suggested they attend the May chapter event to meet more SITE Canada members. They changed their flight to Montreal, and stayed to join the event. They were delighted to meet so many new colleagues. “What a pleasure meeting you in Toronto last week! Thank you for your beautiful energy and your hospitality towards Celia and I. We enjoyed meeting you and your colleagues and sharing the best table at dinner! I can only thank you for being an ambassador of the meeting industry and a bridge between the meeting organizer in Canada and hoteliers like me in Europe.”

SITE Canada was able to donate $2,186.70 last year to KidSport™ through monies raised at the Golf Tournament live auction and raffle. We are aiming to double that number this year and raise over $4,000 for this organization so don’t forget your credit card!
Successful Networking Event

by Diane Alexander

The SITE Canada Young Leaders Committee hosted its first event of the year on April 15th at the close of the Ignite Business Event Expo. Young Leaders from a variety of backgrounds gathered at Joe Badali’s for a networking cocktail reception. With representation from hotels, DMCs, third party planners, corporate planners and students, this group of incentive travel professionals really showed that our industry has a bright future. Special thanks to our sponsor, Marriott Canada, for their support of our program and this event. Stay tuned for details on our next event later in the summer!

SITE Young Leaders is a program designed to engage young professionals with SITE at an early stage in their career. Marriott is the sponsor of SITE Canada Young Leaders

Young Leader Spotlight

Justin Wegiel
G Adventures

As a new member to SITE Canada and the Young Leaders program I’m thrilled to be featured in this edition of the SITElines newsletter. This is my first foray into the incentive travel world and I’m confident that our membership will provide a world of opportunities for us here at G Adventures.

Our focus is to take our travellers off the beaten path and put them on a first-name basis with the people, places and things that make the world so exciting to explore. Adventure is the fastest growing segment in the leisure travel industry and I’m confident the incentive travel world is not too far behind to embrace it. The market is definitely shifting and people are looking for an authentic and genuine travel experience, something different from the norm. Gone are the days of the traditional all-inclusive or cruise, people are looking for more.

I’ve been lucky enough to see and experience some of the world’s most iconic destinations in my eight years working in adventure travel and I have a passion to share these amazing experiences with friends, family, clients and partners alike. From snorkeling with sea lions in the Galapagos, to smoking shisha with Bedouins in the deserts of Jordan, to island hopping in southern Thailand—the list just keeps growing. I’m very much looking forward to meeting all you fantastic SITE members throughout the year and helping to provide your clients with a little adventure.
Cross-border Bliss

by Greg Byrnes

SITE NY Metro and SITE Canada are teaming up and are becoming official sister chapters. As we know in this multi-faceted industry, it’s important to nurture relationships across borders and ensure that we work harmoniously as an industry to make our voices heard! Both chapters are coming together to share ideas, inspire members, and ultimately break ground on a new campaign that will result in long-term partnership across both SITE communities.

Mark your Calendars!

In honour of our new sister status, SITE Canada and SITE New York are planning a border event to celebrate our new partnership. We’ll meet for dinner on the Canadian side of Niagara finish the evening with a boat tour on our mutually shared waterway, the Niagara River with our US friends on the Hornblower Niagara. Mark August 6th on your calendar and plan to attend. More details coming soon.

ICE Awards 2015

by Sandra Eagle

It’s not too early to start thinking about your submission for the 2015 ICE Awards. The ICE Awards were introduced last year to recognize the incredible incentive programs that our members create and the fabulous destinations that they visit.

Terry Manion, executive vice president at Meridican Incentives says “Winning the inaugural ICE Award was very rewarding for our entire team! Although a few individuals tend to be front and centre, no project of this magnitude is successfully delivered without every person in the organization contributing in some way. This was definitely the highlight of 2014 for our team and a very proud moment in the history of Meridican. We know the competition was strong and to be recognized as the best amongst a strong field is always rewarding.”

Heather Douglas, senior buyer, was at Education Day last year to accept the award, and echoes Manion’s thoughts when she says “It’s awesome to have your work recognized by your peers.”

The two award categories are program excellence and destination excellence. The qualifying times for this year’s award is from July 1st, 2014 to June 30th, 2015.

The deadline for submissions is Sept 8th.

For more information visit the ICE Awards webpage.
SITE Canada AGM 2015

by Sandra Eagle

The 2015 SITE Canada AGM took place amid the splendor of the new Aga Khan Museum in Toronto and welcomed incoming 2015 SITE president elect, and joint managing director, Creative Travel India, Rajeev Kohli, as our featured guest speaker.

The AGM networking and dinner was held in the Diwan Restaurant, overlooking the garden pool and inner courtyard of the iconic pyramid.

As a SITE Global ambassador, he highlighted a number of initiatives from SITE headquarters and current trends for the incentive travel industry as a whole. Priorities for SITE Global include strengthening SITE’s value proposition for members, expand the delivery of education, creating a certification program focused on incentive design, developing the existing chapter network and expanding regional strategies to grow membership and introduce new regional events.

Also, near and dear to his heart, is the upcoming SITE Global Conference in New Delhi in October. Given the large, unexplainable, complex, confusing, perplexing and frustrating, scope of India as a country, he nevertheless crusades for his homeland.

Stating “it’s time to cross off one more country on your bucket list,” he detailed the some of the wonderful cultural experiences, the beautiful landscapes and the blend of the very old and the new technology empire that India aspires to.

Kohli encouraged the SITE Canada membership to register and add on one of the 15 pre- or post-conference trips around India, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.
Onika Dainty
Graduate from the Post Graduate Event Management program at Durham College.

My road to the SITE Canada Association seemed to happen overnight. However when I look back at the decisions I have made over the last several years both professionally and academically it is clear to me that my discovery and subsequent involvement in this dynamic association was inevitable.

I have always had a love for history, culture and travel. This led me to complete a Bachelor of Arts Honors in History from Carleton University. I have always loved planning events whether they were during the course of my academic career, volunteering for non-profit organizations or just being the go-to event expert for my family. It was several personal and professional successes that led me to the Durham College program and a move toward becoming a professional in the events industry. During my first semester one of my instructors invited a long-standing SITE Canada member to speak with my class about incentive events. I was completely drawn in by the idea that I could combine my interest in history, culture and travel with my first love: event planning, through the incentive event industry.

Acting on the speaker’s advice I joined SITE Canada as a student member and the rewards have been life changing. Simply by attending the 2014 Holiday Social and reaching out to other seasoned members I was able to secure a field placement with Meridican Incentive Consultants. I gained valuable experience and connections through my time with the organization that will serve me well in any future position.

SITE Canada’s Young Leaders program has also welcomed me into their fold expanding both my network and knowledge of the industry. I am now an active and enthusiastic participant who looks forward to being a part of something that inspires and supports young professionals. I have not missed an event since the Holiday Social and seeing familiar faces at each event gives me not only a sense of belonging but also reassures me that I have access to experienced professionals who share their love of the industry through their insight and direction. With SITE Canada I believe I have found my professional home.

The programs that incentive organizations build involve a complex array of processes; from procurement, to planning to operations and ultimately ensuring your programs are a success that will lead to future partnerships. It is like a puzzle with many pieces that needs to be put together before the big picture is realized. My goal is to learn how to put that puzzle together piece by piece so that I can be part of the success of the overall big picture. I have chosen this industry because of my personal and professional passions and I know the more I get involved in associations like SITE Canada, the more my potential for growth, education and professional success will flourish.