

Melanie Kwong: Hello everyone and good morning or good afternoon, depending on where you are today. Thanks for joining us for our second virtual Parks Canada Town Hall.

My name is Melanie Kwong, I'm the Acting Executive Director of Operations Directorate, and I will be your masters of ceremonies today.

Before we get started, today's event is different from our last virtual town hall. First we have full interpretation services (audio technical difficulties), thank you to our American Sign Language, Langue des signes du Québec and simultaneous translation interpreters. If you'd like to ask a question during the event, simply click the participate button, the person with their hand up, to type and submit your question. If you run into any technical issues, click the question mark to submit your issue and help will be on the way.

So, with us today, we have Ron Hallman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Line Lamothe, Vice-President Human Resources and Employee Wellness, Catherine Blanchard, Vice-President Finance, David Millar, Acting Vice-President Strategic Policy and Investment, Andrew Campbell, Senior Vice-President Operations, Christine Loth-Bown, Vice-President Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage, Michael Nadler, Vice-President External Relations and Visitor Experience, Darlene Upton, Vice-President Protected Areas Establishment and Conservation and Jaclyn Staniforth, Chief Audit and Evaluation Executive.

Also with us, Nicole Cann from the Coastal BC Public Outreach and Engagement Team and Pierre Martel, Jane Park, Spencer Verdiel and Michel Thériault from the Fire Management Services Team.

We'll start this afternoon or this morning with opening remarks from Ron Hallman followed by two panel sessions with our special guests and a question period with the members of senior management committee. I encourage you to ask any questions to any of our panellist throughout this event using the chat feature. I'd like to now invite Ron to say a few words.

Ron Hallman: Thank you, Melanie. Hello everyone.

For those of you who have joined the agency since our last Town Hall session, my name is Ron and my pronouns are him and he. Today, I'd like to share with you my reflections on our operational response to the COVID-19 pandemic to date and highlight a few of our program achievements over the past year. I will then lay out a few current and emergent priorities that will carry us into next year, before we open the session up for questions and answers.

But first I'd like to thank you for welcoming me into your homes and offices again and in return, let me welcome you into my home which is located on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People.

When we last spoke, it was difficult to know what our operational season was going to look like but we worked together, field units, functional leads and union representatives to lay out a plan that earns the confidence of the government and of Canadians, guided always by our overriding priority of keeping our employees and our visitors safe.

Each one of you has worked on the issue of letting the Canadian population access our national parks and our maritime areas of conservations thanks to your collective efforts, 13.5 million Canadians had an opportunity to use Parks Canada between June and September, which is remarkable when you think when there was a long period of time where, for reasons of safety, we couldn't let them access those places. We have spent a lot of money to maintain these places and we have delivered tens of millions of dollars for infrastructure projects and the maintenance of older assets. We reached out virtually to tens of thousands of Canadians, we conducted critical ecological and commemorative integrity monitoring, including projects under natural, nature legacy and growth programming, and we advanced relationships with Indigenous communities throughout the country, all within the operating context of the pandemic. At this time, we are reviewing the lessons learned from the past nine months so that we can apply them to our preparation for spring, summer and fall of 2021.

For office workers and commercially-leased office buildings at headquarters and at regional satellite locations. We're planning for an eventual phased return to work places. In this, we'll be incorporating sufficient flexibility to be adaptable to local realities, including to accommodate the potential for ongoing remote working in accordance with operational requirements and personal preferences. And we've recently provided guidance on support to employees working remotely and that information will be posted online for your reference very soon.

This afternoon, you'll hear from a few of our field unit colleagues about how they adjusted to continue providing outstanding service to Canadians, and you'll also be reminded of some of the amazing work of colleagues across functional groups as well. Colleagues, I don't know what the next few months will bring in terms of infection rates or in terms of a vaccine, although the news is positive, what we're hearing at this time. In either case, I am confident that a continued approach of taking care of one another while, with the spirit of creativity and innovation will allow us to achieve remarkable successes in support of our minister and in the service of Canadians.

Delivering on our mandate took extraordinary energy and effort this year, but I'd like to take a few moments to consider some of the achievements that are all the more remarkable, considering the circumstances. In July, we've recognized Black History in Canada with four designations under the National Program of Historical Commemoration: the enslavement of African people in Canada, black loyalist Richard Pierpoint, heavyweight boxer Larry Gains and The West Indian Domestic Scheme.

In August, we worked with Tesla to bring electric vehicle charging stations for visitor use to 28 of our most popular sites. In September, in partnership with the National Center

for Truth and Reconciliation, we recognized the profound historic significance of the Indian residential school system in Canadian history. We invested sums of \$640 million amount in asset and infrastructure projects with the major completion of 180 infrastructure projects this year.

We delivered on our pledge for the International Conservation of Bison by sending one final planeload of bison to Russia over the Easter weekend. We successfully launched the cooperative management structures for Mealy Mountains National Park. We sent 25 fire management specialists to Oregon to help combat the unprecedented wildfires in the Western United States. We found a safe way to launch our two-week expedition of our research vessel with David Thompson to advance important archeology and seabed mapping work. Mountain Park staff conducted critical lifesaving and recovery operations in response to the tragic accident at the Jasper Icefields. Rideau Canal staff saved two people and a dog whose boat caught fire at the Newboro lockstation.

And we're in the mid-th right now of experiencing our first ever completely virtual Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign. I hope you'll join me in congratulating and thanking the amazing team that led our Parks Canada charitable campaign efforts this year, including our champion, Christine Loth-Bown, our campaign coordinator, Cindy Lee Scott, and the members of the committee including France Brassard, Tiarra Bartram, Isabelle Coleman, Leigh Gardiner, Aryelle Phinney, Paul Bruneau, Marlene Zaluski, Denise Landriault, Jennifer Dunev, Alexe Leduc, Mikele Cloer, Denise Plamondon, Lisa Childs, Kath Trivers, and Genevieve Garceau. And I would like to thank, as well, all of our campaign ambassadors across the agency.

Without further ado, it is my distinct pleasure to announce to you that Parks Canada has raised more than \$94,000 to date, which exceeds our target of \$86,000 by more than \$8,000. These are phenomenal results, colleagues, and they make me feel both proud and grateful, proud because it means a lot to work with people who demonstrate so concretely the importance of giving back and lending a hand to others, and grateful because my family often benefited from the generosity of others when I was growing up. It's gratifying to know then that people who may be struggling now will get the helping hand or services that they need as a result of our collective efforts in the 2020 Parks Canada Government of Canada Workplace Charitable Campaign. Thank you all for your generosity. But it's not over yet.

Our annual, our much anticipated annual campaign gala will occur virtually on December 10 and I understand that some amazing Parks Canada talent will be showcased and, of course, we can all look forward to the upcoming online auction to push our fundraising level even higher.

I would like to turn now to some of our current and emergent priorities for the coming year. We will continue to serve Canadians with safety of our team members and our visitors being top of mind. We will support the Minister in bringing forward legislation to legally protect federal built heritage and we will, in parallel, complete a review of our cultural heritage policies and practices.

We will continue to focus on priority infrastructure projects. In this, we've launched a strengthening investment readiness plan that will position the agency to ultimately seek stable, long-term capital funding at last. This will allow us to better harness the expertise of our exceptional asset management function and recapitalize our real property assets on a lifecycle basis rather than the current ad hoc approach of asking for money every few years. It will also allow us to place a greater emphasis on protecting the commemorative integrity of our cultural assets and facilitate improved visitor experiences as a priority for our contemporary asset investments while making strides in areas such as greening our operations, adapting to climate change and making our places more physically accessible to visitors and staff with disabilities.

We will advance initiatives to support the government's ambitious nature agenda in terms of protecting 25% of Canada's lands and waters by 2025. In this, we will play a critical leadership role in two of the great issues of our time, biodiversity and climate change, through national parks and NMCA establishment initiatives and through the identification of potential new urban parks, ecological corridors and other ecological conservation measures. We will work to continue, we will continue to work with key partners and across programs to support local tourism economies and to extend our reach to Canadians in urban environments. We'll also support the Minister in responding to his 2020 Ministers' Roundtable, which exceed even the previous record by setting engagement levels that were experienced in 2017.

And now for the last part of my observations, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about the priority placed on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility here at Parks Canada. So much of what we plan for and talk about relates to what we do in the service of Canadians, equally important to me is the manner in which we serve and the manner in which we relate to each other and to Canadians.

There was a time not that long ago when I sincerely thought that Canada, and by extension the Government of Canada and Parks Canada, was largely barrier-free, it was also racism-free and bias-free and with equity to all. I have come to realize though that while progress has certainly been made over the years, these high ideals have not yet been fully realized. Not in Canada, not in the Government of Canada and not in Parks Canada, not yet.

I have come to more fully appreciate this as a result of news reports and from presentations by colleagues across the government, and I have been humbled to learn this even more directly from team members here in Parks Canada who have called me or emailed me to share their life experiences. I have come to more fully realize that racism is still far more prominent than many of us would like us to believe. I have come to more fully realize that unconscious bias exists and I have come to more fully realize that too many in our society, and by extension in our workforce and our potential workforce, are being held back simply because of the colour of their skin or their gender identification or because they have a disability. The reality, as we are learning, is that far too often, racism, systemic racism, harassment and bias go unseen, unacknowledged

or unchallenged.

My message today is that we all have a role to play in addressing this reality here in Parks Canada and that the Senior Management Committee is united in our commitment to addressing these challenges with you. Becoming the agency that we aspire to be, one that values equity and diversity, combats racism and harassment and addresses systemic barriers to ensure that all employees can feel welcome and succeed at Parks Canada, takes work, and it takes action, action that starts with acknowledging that systemic barriers exist and working to understand and address our own unconscious biases.

As an organization, we are taking action and we will be taking further action through several recent and planned initiatives. We have updated our exit questionnaire for departing employees to better understand why, for example, employees from diverse groups leave us. We're developing a new employment equity plan conducting an employment system's review and developing an accessibility strategy. We will update our hiring approaches to more effectively prioritize diversity and equity, which will include, in some cases, targeted hiring approaches to ensure that our team can and does and will better reflect the face of Canada. We will integrate diversity and inclusion into leadership training. We will work to develop our agency commitments on equity, diversity and inclusion and accessibility leading to human equity to guide our actions as an organization. Human equity looks at a person as a whole and how all the aspects of who they are work together. It recognizes that factors which may lead any of us to identify with one or more equity groups may inform who we are but they don't define who we are.

We will put in place a new reimagined Champion Structures and we will support the renewal of related employee networks to help colleagues in all parts of the agency engage more frequently with other interested team members on a host of related matters. We will also be launching a diversity and inclusion newsletter through which to communicate progress and increase the reach of these initiatives.

Programmatically, we will continue implementing our new comprehensive approach for the commemoration and presentation of Canada's history to achieve more inclusive stories. Diversity of race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, language and religion has always existed in Canada, and we will be working to ensure that our heritage places make space for these stories so that we can truly tell the stories of Canada. On December 3rd, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we have launched the mobility passport, a tool that will allow public service employees to describe the barriers they face in the workplace and identify the accommodation tools and supports that they need to succeed.

We're also committed to holding future town halls and all staff events in accessible and inclusive ways so that everyone feels welcome and well supported to take part.

And finally, I'm pleased to announce that in late January 2021, with these preparatory

steps in place, I will host the first in a series of online engagement sessions on equity, diversity, inclusion, human equity and accessibility. My hope is that these series will complement other forums that exist across networks and departments, including some that various among you lead already to provide an opportunity to share employee insight and experiences regarding systemic racism and other barriers that we know, that we know are holding members of equity communities back.

My expectation is that our new, more inclusive and transparent governance structure and our soon-to-be rolled out reimagined Champion Structure will provide an enduring mechanism and human equity lens through which all of our internal and external policies and programs will be conceived, developed, implemented and evaluated in the future. All of this together is intended to put in place the building blocks for a systemic response to what we know to be systemic challenges.

Colleagues, I believe sincerely that to truly become the organization we aspire to be, we must continue to look inward, to consider how we can live up to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, human equity and accessibility and better reflect those ideals back to our teammates and to the people and communities whom we serve. If you would like to help deliver on this commitment, to make Parks Canada a more inclusive and equitable environment, there will be an opportunity to do so, and I ask you to join us, we need your help to make a difference. And if there's any doubt about whether we are collectively ready to turn our minds and our resources towards this goal in a structure, systemic way and to commit to working together towards greater human equity for all Parks Canada employees beginning today, then I invite us to contemplate the following three questions: If not us, who? If not now, when? And if not, why not?

Before I conclude, I would like you to know how privileged I feel to lead our amazing team at this time and how gratifying it is that even in uncertain times, we continue to find ways to come together to achieve tremendous results and to look out for each other. I know it hasn't been easy for any of us and I know that we all have unique and challenging experiences since last March, both personally and professionally, but I know, too, how much being a part of this team has helped me in my role and in my daily life and I hope that you feel the same way. You've heard me speak before about my hope and my expectation that through it all, we will continue to work as one team with one vision and with one voice in how we understand and project our mandate to Canadians, even as we welcome and embrace the diversity of views, lived experiences and perspectives that each of us bring to our role. Today, I reaffirm that hope and that expectation.

Thank you, dear colleagues. I appreciate this opportunity to connect once again and I look forward to the remainder of our agenda.

And with this, I will turn it back over to Melanie. Thank you.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you Ron. I would now like to share a short video showcasing some of the great work from this past season.

(Video starts)

(Music)

(Video ends)

Truly great work by everyone.

I'd now like to present Nicole Cann from the Coastal British Columbia Field Unit to talk about virtual programming.

Nicole Cann: Thank you, Melanie. Hello, *bonjour à tous*. My name is Nicole Cann and my pronouns are she and her, and I am honoured to be coming to you today from my home which is located on the traditional territory of the Tsawwassen, Musqueam, Kwantlen, Katzie and Sto:lo First Nations.

I manage the Public Outreach and Education team for the Coastal BC Field Unit and this summer, my team and I were very proud to be able to pivot our work quickly in uncertain times. We were able to deliver almost 40 virtual programs and reach over 4,000 Canadians in the comfort and safety of their own homes. Essential to our success was the establishment of our virtual studio where our team delivered the majority of our programs. I am not a technology expert, so I was very nervous embarking on this adventure and I was shocked as we went through it by just easy and affordable it was to create a studio space where we could deliver high quality virtual programs.

The first thing we did was identify a location for our studio. We are privileged to have an office space in Vancouver, specifically for our students, and due to COVID restrictions it was not going to be used as such for the foreseeable future. This became the perfect place for us to set up our studio as we could leave all the equipment set up permanently, for now, and it's a closed-door space which gives us the ability to control for environmental noise pollution.

When we deliver a virtual program there are typically two staff involved onsite. One is the presenter, the person who will be on camera, like I am right now, and who will be interacting with the online audience. The other staff member is there primarily for tech, and also moral support. This is the person behind the camera and they are responsible for running the technology, switching virtual backgrounds and playing audio clips as necessary, troubleshooting if and when things go wrong and monitoring the online audience chat if there is one.

There are only three pieces of essential equipment required to be able to deliver a virtual program: A dedicated laptop with webcam; two, a stable source of internet, we use MiFi aircard, this is necessary for us because our space does not have access to hardwired non-network internet connects; and thirdly, a clean background free of discussion, of distractions rather. That's all, that's it. We elevated our programs with a

few additional elements, including a green screen to allow for background changes during our presentations, an external web camera separate from the one that came with our laptop which allowed for a better picture and sound quality, Bluetooth earpiece microphones for all presenters for better sound quality and by having them available to each of our presenters and students, we were also able to ensure that they were all safe and able to be disinfected; a secondary monitor so that the presenters could see themselves as the online audience does and better orient themselves on the green screen so you're not pointing here when you mean to be pointing there, a ring light to better light your environment and improve the picture quality, an external set of speakers for better audio quality when playing sound clips and presentations, and a laptop stand to make the setup more ergonomic for the staff running your tech support. We were able to pull our studio together for under \$700 as we already had and were able to repurpose the laptop, green screen, speakers, external monitor and our aircard.

This studio is currently being shared between the Vancouver Learn to Camp, Urban Outreach and Southern Resident Killer Whale Outreach Teams to deliver live virtual programs, and as a studio to record short outreach videos.

We use a shared schedule between teams to avoid double booking the studio and to ensure that all necessary physical distancing and disinfecting practices can be applied within the studio at all times and between uses. We are eager to continue to explore what we can do with virtual programming in our studio next year, and we look forward to sharing what we learn with you.

Setting up a program studio was surprisingly easy, very affordable and it allowed us to make meaningful connections with Canadians. If you are interested in setting up a studio yourself and have any questions at all, we would be happy to help. There are best practices and an approval tree on the new media ParksNet page, and we've shared a list of our materials and an internal video tour of our studio set up on the National Office Public Outreach and Education Team Confluence site. I believe Yumi will actually be able to share a link to those in the chat. Thank you, Yumi. The Public Outreach and Education Team is the National Office lead on live virtual programs and they are happy to offer support and guidance for anything that you need.

Thank you very much. And Melanie, if there's time for questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Melanie Kwong: Great. Thanks Nicole, really appreciate the presentation. And we do have some questions, they are coming from some of your colleagues in Alberta. So, I'll start with the first question, which I'm sure you'll know like the back of your hand, so Nicole, what was you and your team's main target audience or audiences?

Nicole Cann: Great question. So, our main target audience, thank you very much for asking, was primarily to work with our existing partners that we've had longstanding strong partner relationships with, for our teams when we've been delivering in-person programs, and these partners are primarily working with local urban Canadians and

diverse groups who, through the Learn to Camp Program, primarily are trying, were trying to work with those partners to help break barriers and help them understand they can come to our places safely and how to do so safely. So, our target audiences didn't really change, we weren't trying to be something like National Geographic, we weren't trying to hit millions and millions Canadians. We ultimately still wanted to hit the same target audiences of young, urban families and new Canadians and people who are having trouble accessing our places, we just needed to figure out how to do it virtually now instead of in-person.

Melanie Kwong: That's great, thanks. We have a question from a National Office colleague and you shared a lot of information in terms of how things went this summer, it's going to maybe be a hard question for you to answer, but do you have a favourite project from this challenging summer?

Nicole Cann: Oh (laughing), off the top of my head, I have two. I think that our very first program was special because, as a virtual program, myself and my team had never done anything like this before, we were all figuring it out together, which is what made it a special experience. But our very first virtual program was delivered in partnership with the Royal BC Museum, a special partner for us, and it focused on the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales, and that is an animal and a species that's close to my heart, it's what brought me to Vancouver from where I was born in Winnipeg, and ultimately what led me to working for Parks Canada, so being able to connect with over a thousand Canadians in that one presentation, was our most popular presentation as well, on a species that means so much to me, with my whole team coming together for our very first program, that's a favourite. And my other favourite is different for different reasons. The numbers of Canadians we hit with our second program are very, very small but it's because it's such a targeted group, two of our students developed a program specifically working with the Canucks Autism Network designed for young kids with autism and their families. And we only reached about 30 participants, maybe up to 40 participants with that program, but the numbers don't matter, it's the fact that we were able to show, with that program, that no matter your ability, you deserve quality interpretive programs, even when you can't get access to those in-person, from Parks Canada. So, that was a very special experience too.

Melanie Kwong: Thanks. I'm going to remember I can choose two favourites the next time I'm asked—

(Laughing)

Melanie Kwong: So, another question from colleagues in Alberta. What tools or tactics were the most successful in promoting the virtual programming?

Nicole Cann: Our most important tool was our partners and I hate to say it that way because it feels like I'm diminishing the relationship we have with our partners, but the truth is that every single virtual program my team delivered this summer was done through an existing partner relationship. We did not do any promotion of our own

programs, it was all through the very established, strong, trusting relationships that we have with partners that we've worked with for years, sometimes over a decade, in Vancouver. And these partners gave us access to their audiences and their own social media platforms and their own promotional tools in order to reach those target audiences. We could not have done it without them.

Melanie Kwong: I think that's a perfect place to end the questions. So, thank you, Nicole, very much for your presentation.

Now, we want to thank, once more to thank the Coastal British Columbia Field Unit. And now I'd like to present the Fire Management team.

Pierre Martel: Hello. I would like to start by acknowledging that I am sitting in Mi'kmaq, the beautiful un-ceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. I am grateful for the Mi'kmaq ancestors who have taken care of this landscape, helped shape it, and learn from it for over 10,000 years.

(French in the video) I am excited to be here to share some of our story from this year with all of you. In a few days, it will be one year since Jane and Spencer sitting here on the panel with me today, gave up their Holidays with their families, and departed for Australia as part of a historic Canadian contingent that went to provide assistance with their fire situation. They were the first of a series of 4 deployments over a period of almost 3 months, that saw 13 of our team members deployed from PEI to Gulf Island. It was a big commitment for all those team members and for the Agency, but they all brought back some invaluable experience that will help us with our own program.

In March, just catching our breath after our last team members returned from across the world, right when fire season was starting for us, while Point Pelee National Park was in the middle of conducting our first prescribed fires of the year, COVID hit Canada. Everyone across the fire program, from our team members and field units to those on my team and National Office, had to quickly change gears so that we could immediately deliver our essential service for the agency while making sure that we did everything necessary to keep our team members safe and healthy. It involved, for example, quickly adapting in the context of COVID to deliver our regular fire crew training in April, procuring right away supplies and equipment required for COVID, putting on essential components of the program (inaudible) such as prescribed fires, and putting guidelines in place for every aspect of our operations.

Under the circumstances, we have been very lucky with a quiet fire season across Canada. Our staff were able to respond as efficiently as usual to the fire season. We have kept our staff healthy. Gradually over the season, our firefighters resumed various field activities such as managing vegetation around our communities and infrastructure to reduce wildfire risk. The only significant fire that required a deployment of personnel was a fire Akami-Uapishk^U - KakKasuak Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve. It was the first significant fire requiring a deployment of resources in the parks since its creation, which brought some challenges, but response from the field unit staff or the

assistance of our fire crew based in Terra Nova National Park, our partners in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador and members of my division in National Office was excellent, particularly in the context.

Towards the end of August, we were even able to resume prescribed fire activities to continue to meet our ecological restoration and wildfire risk reduction objectives. The weather did not cooperate very well, but we still completed burns throughout the remainder of the fire season in Banff Glaciers, Mount Revelstoke and La Mauricie National Parks. In the previous five years, we have completed an average of 15, 18 burns per year, and this year, even with the context, including the freeze, our teams in the field units succeeded in completing seven burns.

Since 2020 does not seem to want to make it easy on us, this was not the end once our own fire season ended; we then received a mutual aid request from the US for resources for their unprecedented fires in California, Oregon and Washington states. Even with COVID risk and the need to quarantine for 14 days on return after the deployment, we wanted to support our neighbours and 25 of our team members volunteered and were deployed to Oregon in mid-September as part of the Canadian response. They all returned home safely and healthy and brought back lessons learned that will help us adjust our own COVID measures ahead of next fire season.

It's been a very challenging 12 months. Since, basically, today last year, when we were prepping to send Jane and Spencer to Australia, actually I think they arrived there today exactly, but as manager of the program, I could not be more proud of all of our team members. We went through two historical international deployments, the first of its kind for Parks Canada, and delivered our program successfully in the context of COVID, including managing to implement prescribed fires and conducting risk reduction activities at our normal annual level. This required a whole-of-BC team effort to provide support to the fire program, with COVID obviously, but also with the international deployment that brought a number of complexities and challenges, which many colleagues from various functions and locations across the country help us overcome to successfully deploy team members to support international partners in times of need and deliver programs during difficult times. Thank you to everyone across the agency that contributed to this success.

So, thanks to our PCEO to have invited us to be part of this Town Hall and share our story with everyone today. And I don't think I actually said when I started, I'm Pierre Martel, the Manager of the National Fire Program. And on the panel with me today to help answer questions are Jane Park, Fire Administration Specialist from the Banff Field Unit and one of the Incident Commanders of our National Incident Management Teams, Spencer Verdiel, Fire Management Officer in Mount Revelstoke Glacier Field Unit and also one of our Incident Commanders, and Michel Thériault who works for my team in National Office out of La Mauricie National Park and currently on assignment leading the Core Prescribed Fire Retrospective Analysis.

Melanie Kwong: Okay. Thank you, Pierre. And of course again we have Jane and

Spencer and Michel on as well. So thank you for the presentation and we have a few questions for the team, and the first one, likely for Jane or Spencer, if you could, it's from colleagues in National Office who would like to know what you learned from your counterparts around the world when deployed during the past year?

Jane Park: I guess I can go first, and then hand it to you Spence. Yeah, I guess it was really interesting for me to learn a lot about how different ecosystems in opposite end of the world work in terms of fire ecology and the fire regimes, so, you know, trying to translate what we see in Canada to the type of fire behaviour and what's ecologically appropriate in Australia was probably a real, the most interesting thing to learn. A lot of the other fire management skills and strategies and tactics I found quite similar, which made it actually fairly easy to integrate. But yeah, in terms of interest I think that was, for me, the most interesting.

Spencer Verdiel: And maybe I can just add a few things there to that question, or that response. One of the things that I found very interesting over in Australia is the way that all of their levels of government came together to work towards a common goal. It was very evident that they've been practising a lot and through a bunch of various means and a national system, they were able to be very effective at controlling and minimizing risk to their staff and to important infrastructure. And that's something that I hope that we can bring home to translate into Canada and national parks is how to work collaboratively with our provincial and municipal governments. Thank you.

Melanie Kwong: Thanks Jane, thanks Spencer. Our next question is in French, probably for Pierre's team, why do we have directed burns in certain areas?

Michel Thériault: I'll answer. The two main reasons are for, why we have ecological restoration burns, it's to re-establish the landscape or protect species that are endangered, and we extinguish most of these fires for public safety. But we reintroduce fire at the time and under the conditions that we judge useful and pertinent and that way, we can manage the fuel and burn the vegetation in the appropriate sector, protecting communities, under conditions that we control, which avoids that a forest fire can reach the more endangered infrastructures.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, Michel. That concludes our questions. Thank you for your questions and thanks to the Fire Management team for the presentation.

So, we'll now ask that our President and CEO and Vice-Presidents, get ready for the question period because it's their turn in the hot seat.

You can ask the question in the language of your choice. So, we'll be starting with a question to David Millar.

The question is: will the agency adopt a video conferencing platform to facilitate our work with other federal departments? It seems many other departments are on Teams, Microsoft Teams, and don't have access to Google Meets.

David Millar: Hi, thanks for the question, Melanie. And thanks everybody. So currently, we're continuing to use Google Meets but we're certainly exploring a variety of different tools to support ongoing collaboration and working with colleagues across government to look at options that allow the, I guess, that facilitate collaboration. And I would be happy to have Brad Martin, our CIO, provide some additional information about some of the other opportunities that we're exploring subsequently to employees. But certainly it's something that's on our mind, recognizing that we've learned a lot over the past six months about the value of different collaboration tools. It's certainly something that we're continuing to explore to try and ensure that our staff have the tools that enable collaboration.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, David. The next question is for Catherine Blanchard in Finance. So, the question is how will Parks Canada's budget be impacted in '20-'21 and '21-'22 as a result of the present spending by the federal government for COVID-19 relief for Canadians? This is, (laughing), I'm saying it's a question from Alberta. Thank you.

Catherine Blanchard: Thanks very much, Melanie, and thank you, Alberta. I can honestly say I do wish I had a crystal ball on this one. As it stands right now, we're not really privy to the conversations of this nature that may be going on at the highest levels of government, but I can tell you that the government does have confidence in the work that Parks Canada is doing in providing access to Canadians to our sites across the country, they value our work. And I think a really good example of this is that this past year, we did experience a revenue shortfall and the central agencies came in and they provided us revenue replacements so that we can continue to our service to Canadians. So again, for right now, I don't have any information about what might be coming, but we're very focused in terms of providing the services to Canadians and continuing down that path. And when more information is available on what the future may hold, we'll definitely be sharing it with colleagues across the agency and developing a plan accordingly. So, thank you very much for the question.

Melanie Kwong: Thanks Catherine. The next question is actually in reference to a series of questions submitted about the important issue of addressing systemic racism in Parks Canada. This contributor asked a range of questions, including whether Black, Indigenous and People of Colour are part of the planning process to combat systemic racism, if Parks Canada was present at the federal Black Employees Caucus, if mental health support will be available for colleagues who are Black, Indigenous and People of Colour and if there will be support for team members involved in social movements. I would invite Line Lamothe to begin the response to this question. Please, Line.

Line Lamothe: Hello everyone, thank you for the question.

I would like to start to recognize that systemic racism and discrimination are embedded in our society. It is part of our system, our policies, our process, our organizational practices in the public service at Parks Canada and as part of Parks Canada

Management Team and also as Head of Human Resources in the Public Service, I have committed by signing a declaration to lead by example and to influence a positive change.

So, to support with active measures and with active decisions, personal influence for human resources that we want to be inclusive and anti-racist. Over the last months, I self-educated and participated with the Senior Management Committee members in sensitization sessions to fight racism and systemic discrimination. You've heard our President mention some of the actions and the steps to come.

So we are encouraging you to participate to our virtual session that will be starting in January in terms of all of us to make a difference and pushing further the issue of racism and discrimination in our workplace. So, thank you, Melanie. And the mic is yours now.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, Line, because there is a second part to the question, which is very detailed, more specifically, could we have a follow-up, can we know, that person is noting that they have an impression that more support can be given concerned employees, and how does Park Canada intend to get people involved in our action plan?

Line Lamothe: Thank you for the clarification, Melanie. As mentioned, we will be holding virtual sessions for all employees starting in January where all employees will have to participate in setting up future steps. So, we will be having to take concrete measures to see how we can change our work environment.

What I would say is stay tuned, in January, we're starting with virtual session where all of you will be engaged in terms of moving this file further and making sure that we all have input, views and what we can do in terms of improving our workplace. Thank you, Melanie.

Melanie Kwong: And thank you, Line. This is a very important issue and these sessions in January will certainly be of great importance.

So the next question is for Christine Loth-Bown and it comes from a colleague in National Office and the question is, given the ongoing pandemic and considering the risks COVID-19 poses to Indigenous communities, is there any particular guidance related to engaging and consulting with Indigenous partners and organizations that we should be aware of?

Christine Loth-Bown: Thank you, Melanie, for the question. So, we've released some guidance, and that's available on Parks net, in order to give all those engaging with Indigenous communities' guidance during this time. We've worked with the Department of Justice on that. But in short, that guidance is really important in that, as you've noted, we need to be extremely safe and respectful during this time. So, there's not, while there's guidance there, there's not necessarily a one-size fits all. Some communities

have indicated to us that due to capacity, due to stress and things in their communities, they're not open to consultation at this time, so we need to respect that. On the other hand, we have examples of other communities that have reached out to field units, to other program areas and they are open to having consultations. So, in that case, we are responding and having consultations and engagement sessions with those particular communities, and we are doing so in a very COVID-respectful manner, so they're done virtually and where we have done various different engagements sessions or signing or things with communities, we've done those in a social distancing, very limited capacity way. So, and we've also sent out emails and other correspondence and had virtual opportunities for people to be able to participate and provide us with information during engagement and consultation sessions.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, Christine. The next question is for Michael Nadler. What is the future of the Learn to Camp Program?

Michael Nadler: Thanks so much, Melanie, and great question and a real pleasure to respond. Can I first provide some applause to Nicole for her great work on the presentation today, and the excellent work that she and her team have done over the past months on Outreach and Engagement, including on programs like Learn to Camp, which has been a great success for the agency. And I'm just so proud of everyone involved in that initiative for their success in expanding the reach of that program and introducing so many thousands of Canadians to the joy of experiencing the outdoors in a safe way.

It is true that the program, as it stands right now, will sunset on March 31. Folks that involved in its delivery should be confident that we are preparing a proposal for its renewal for consideration, and we saw in the recent federal economic update statement that renewal Youth Employment Strategy Funding, upon which we depend for the program, is also eminent. And so, a lot of the stars are aligning for its delivery. I have communicated through our team in ERVE that we will continue the program next year, no matter what happens, and if for some reason the program is not renewed, we'll determine our way forward next year. Thanks so much, Melanie.

Melanie Kwong: Thanks Michael. Thank you, Michael. I'd just like to note; we have been getting another series of questions following some of the responses that Line Lamothe provided. So, at this time, I'll just invite Ron to maybe speak more generally to the question of diversity and inclusion.

Ron Hallman: Okay. Thank you, Melanie, and thank you, Line, for the response that you provided, and I will just go on record saying I support everything that Line has said about the need to undertake this work.

But, you know, I would observe that since we all saw those horrible images on the news that led to some actions by Black Lives Matter and others, and we saw events not only in Canada, or not only outside of Canada, but also in Canada, let's be honest, and it has affected many of us, regardless of where we live, regardless of what community we

come from. It has affected my family, my daughters, they were as horrified by some of the atrocious actions perpetrated by people, as any of us were. And so, in the days following the response by Black Lives Matter, you know, we have taken steps. And I want to just remind ourselves about what we've done and what we're trying to do. So, we have had communications to staff about racism and the need to fight racism, and that silence isn't good enough, we need to actively combat racism. And I identified in my opening remarks some initiatives that we have underway about equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility writ large because I really do want to work for good treatment, respectful treatment for anyone in any equity group and regardless of whether they identify in an equity group or more than one equity group.

And that is why we are laying the foundation through our governance structure that will have all of our policies and our programs looked at through the lens of GBA+ and of human equity to see the interplay of some of these communities in the work that we do. I have participated in many sessions recently within government, outside of government, with leadership networks that some, specifically from the Black community in Parks Canada, participate in and lead, and discussions with folks through the Minister's Roundtable. We know we have work to do. And not only with our employees but with the people who would be our visitors at our national parks and who would be our future employees if we could show them that we are the kind of employer that they want to work with. And so, I say to you that these are systemic problems, there is systemic racism, there are unconscious biases and there are biases against the Black community, against other visible minority communities, against disabled people, against people of the LGBTQ communities and others. And I believe systemic challenges such as this requires a systemic long-lasting approach.

And so, to the question earlier about do we have the anti-racism action plan for Parks Canada and who's participating in it, it is a great question and the answer is we don't have that action plan yet. We are putting in place the building blocks and the foundation, as I've already laid out to you, including a new reimagined Champion structure that will be supported with networks so that beginning in January, we can engage interested colleagues about human equity and about some specific equity groups that are relevant to you. That work is going to start in January and from there, I'm hoping that you will join us in that work in whichever of those areas are of interest or relevance to you and from there, we will build collectively and together the action plan that makes sense for us and puts us on a long-term path to have equity for all in Parks Canada. Thank you.

Back to you, Melanie.

Melanie Kwong: Thanks Ron and thanks to everyone who is sending in questions. One of the fun things about live is you might be given a script, but you may not stick to it. So, I just want to remind everybody that, like last time, the questions that are coming in that have not received answers due to the time constraints of this format, we will be looking at all of those questions and providing answers to those, so thank you very much for taking the time to write on this topic.

We do have time for some more questions on different topics. This next one is one for our colleagues in Strategic Policy and Investment and this is with regard to return to offices.

So, the question is in French, for David. How do you envision return to work in Parks Canada offices?

David Millar: Thank you, Melanie. This will be a gradual return, and we will respect public health directives. We will advise them that we will have more employees, that they are already, the people who work onsite, people who work in critical services, but we also realize that there are other employees that would like to have the advantage of working at home, but we wanted to make sure that everyone is safe and we will give them the necessary tools for their health and safety, so that all employees in our buildings and offices are safe. We will change our approach when we are sure that the environment is appropriate.

So just very briefly to make sure that's clear because I know we have translators. You know, we're aware certainly that there are some employees who would benefit from having access to our offices in order to be able to do aspects of their job. The transition will be gradual, it will be measured, it will be based on public health advice. We know that there are many employees already in the workplace now and doing critical services and business resumption activities, we know that there are additional employees who would benefit from having access to our workplaces when the time is right. We are working on the plans and tools and measures to enable that in a safe, appropriate and gradual way, but we'll be watching the public health advice, and the timing of that will be based on public health advice to ensure the safety of all of our employees.

That's all I'll say for now, but Line may want to add to that. Thank you.

Line Lamothe: Thank you, David. What I'd like to add, I'd like to add about our protocols relating to communicable diseases, we want all our information to have, employees to have the information and protective personal equipment that is adapted to the work they do. We will want to make sure that the public health directives are known and followed as far as social distancing, hand washing and masks, so that all the other measures that are put in place by our health and safety committees are followed.

So basically it's to apply and know about the requirement that we have in our protocol on infectious disease and to make sure that employees have the information, the training and the personal protective equipment that is required for the work that they do, that we follow the guidance of physical distancing, that we apply hand hygiene and wear our nonmedical masks. Thank you for having asked the question.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, David and Line. The next question is for Michael Nadler. And the question is in English and it is what is the plan for fees in 2021?

Michael Nadler: Well, Melanie, that is an excellent, excellent question. And if I could

just start, actually, by recognizing the hard week, the hard work rather, of the team that works on our fees, and so, and I know that team is actually very inclusive, it touches all of the field units and business units across the country and that we are nearing a possible change in our fees in January. And so, folks working on the fee file, but probably others implicated in this area, know that we put together a four-part proposal for the Minister's consideration around our fee structures. That proposal is still being considered. In fact, it has been the subject of a couple of briefings very recently. We're hopeful that the Minister will approve the package.

Regardless, given that we are, we're getting very close to January, no matter what happens, folks that are involved in the fee business should expect some communication from my office very imminently on how to manage our circumstances in January, either through public announcement of changes in fees that would be implemented in the future in 2023 or some adjustments that would happen in the next 12 months but not immediately in January. So, more communications are to come on that but again, we're hopeful that our proposal on fees will be approved by the Minister. Thanks so much, Melanie.

Melanie Kwong: Thank you, Michael. And thank you for that question. One last question, and perhaps Line will win the competition on the most questions received. Have we taken into account the impact on women, for the leave allowed to, linked to the COVID, or the COVID leave (699 leave)?

Line Lamothe: This is an excellent question and I'd like to specify that after a consultation with people from Treasury Board, the directives were changed. There are new directives on the 699 leave in November. So, the paid leave will be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on individual circumstances of each employee. And after having considered the modified work or work from home or flexible work hours for employees, having considered all different types of paid leave in the collective agreements, we will take into account employees' circumstances. So, there are five types of situations that, when people can use the 699 leave; if an employee has symptoms of COVID or must be isolated, second situation, if an employee has risk of serious symptoms of COVID, if he is a health helper or if has needs for certain accommodations for technology. So, I encourage you to have the conversations with your supervisors, with your managers and define or describe your own situations. Thank you.

Melanie Kwong: Given that it's the last question, I'd like to thank the members of the executive committee for their answers. I'd also like to thank our colleagues who have stated earlier that the video didn't work for everyone.

So thank you to members of SMC for the questions and answers period and we're also going to just thank colleagues also who have let us know that they didn't maybe catch all of the video. We're going to try to play that video for you again, and then we will move to Ron for concluding remarks. So, the video will start. Thank you.

(Video starts)

(Music)

(Video ends)

And now to conclude today's Town Hall, I'd like to invite Ron to provide some closing remarks. To you, Ron.

Ron Hallman: Thank you, Melanie, and thank you for doing such a great job as a master of ceremony today. I would also like to thank our colleagues Line, Darlene, Catherine, Christine, Michael, Andrew, David and Jaclyn, both for their participation in our question and answer session today and for the remarkable leadership and team work that they bring to their roles each and every day. And, of course, a big thank you to Nicole from Coastal BC Field Unit and Pierre, Jane, Michel, Spencer from the Fire Management Services Team.

It is always wonderful to have an opportunity to learn about the important work of colleagues, and I'm very pleased that we were able to showcase just some of the great work of Parks Canada teams this year during this Town Hall meeting. I also want to thank each of you for attending today, your active participation and your questions have been sincerely appreciated.

And while I have your attention, I really hope that each of you will take time to participate in this year's Public Service Employee Survey which is underway now. It is very important to me and to the whole senior management team that your voice is heard regarding the state of our workplace, and so I encourage all of you to have your say and to complete the survey.

Looking ahead to the winter season, let's all remain vigilant and continue to follow local health guidelines and OSH guidance when it comes to protecting ourselves, our colleagues and our visitors.

Thank you all once again for everything that you've been doing, not only to help flatten the curve, but to help advance the important work of Parks Canada in the service of Canadians. In these extraordinary times, we really are stronger together because we are all in this together as one team, with one vision, and with one voice. *Merci*. Thank you very much.