BC Fairs Learning Exchange – "Shaping Tomorrow, Today"
Agricultural Hall, Saanich Fairgrounds

Program Schedule – Friday, October 16 *Speakers and times are subject to change*

8:00am – 8:00pm Entry Foyer Registration Desk Open

9:00am – 10:15am Juniper Room
Opening Keynote: You Make THE Difference: Will We Meet the Moment
Speaker: Ian Hill, Founder and Volunteer CEO, You Make THE Difference Foundation

Across British Columbia, the fair is far more than an event. It is a cornerstone of identity, a driver of economic vitality, a preserver of agricultural heritage, and a gathering place where every generation finds connection—from wide-eyed children experiencing wonder for the first time to elders reliving traditions rooted in the land. And yet, this is a moment unlike any other.

Volunteerism is waning. Leadership is weary. Communities are divided and distracted. But still the fair stands—ready to bring people together, ready to inspire belonging, ready to remind us of who we are and why we matter. This is the moment we must meet.

In this powerful opening keynote, award-winning fair and Ag Society advocate Ian Hill will introduce the You Make THE Difference National Initiative in British Columbia —a provincial movement created to honor, equip, and ignite the Difference Makers who make the fair possible. Board members, volunteers, youth leaders, staff, and supporters will be reminded not only of their value, but also of the opportunity before them to shape the future.

This is more than a celebration. It is a call to action. Because the fair matters now more than ever— And so do you. You are THE Difference Maker!

10:30am – 11:45am Session 1A Juniper Room
Destination Events Program: Practical Insights for Applicants
Presented by Belinda Ewald-Middleton, Senior Program Advisor, Tourism Sector Strategy Branch at the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

This session will provide a practical overview of the Destination Events Program, including program objectives, evaluation criteria, and key application requirements. Attendees will gain insights into what makes a strong application, how event impacts are assessed, and important considerations for demonstrating tourism and economic benefits. The session will offer actionable guidance to help eligible events across British Columbia strengthen their applications and better understand the competitive assessment process for this funding opportunity.

10:30am – 11:45am Session 1B Poplar Room
First Sitting – Round Table Discussions - *Table topics to be confirmed*.

11:45am – 1:00pm Cedar Room Networking Luncheon

1:00pm – 2:15pm Session 2A Juniper Room
Beating Burnout: Sustaining Passion in Challenging Times
Presented by Ian Hill, Founder and Volunteer CEO, You Make THE Difference Foundation

Passion fuels our fairs. It's what drives board members, staff, and volunteers to give their time, energy, and heart to their communities. But with rising demands, shrinking volunteer bases, and financial pressures, burnout is no longer just a possibility—it's a reality. Left unchecked, it drains energy, diminishes effectiveness, and threatens the long-term future of fairs and agricultural societies.

Burnout isn't just fatigue—it's when the energy is gone but the demands keep coming. It shows up as exhaustion, disengagement, and doubt. If unaddressed, it doesn't just sap energy—it dismantles identity. That's why leaders must learn to recognize it early and act before it takes
hold.

In this breakout session, award-winning advocate Ian Hill will share practical strategies to prevent burnout and reignite energy. Drawing on decades of leadership, he'll show how individuals and boards can build "burnout immunity plans" to thrive under pressure.

What You'll Learn:

- Spot the early warning signs of burnout.
- Create a Personal Burnout Immunity Plan by reconnecting with your WHY, setting non-negotiable boundaries, practicing strategic self-care, and scheduling regular recharge rituals.
- Develop an Organizational Burnout Immunity Plan by clarifying expectations, defining roles, setting achievable goals, and aligning boards and volunteers with purpose.

This session is designed for fair leaders, staff, and volunteers who want to sustain passion and protect their well-being while leading with clarity and purpose.

1:00pm – 2:15pm Session 2B Poplar Room
Borrow My Genius: The Workshop Where We Steal the Best Ideas
Presented by Kryssie Thomson, Founder of Fair Systems That Work

You bring forward the biggest challenges you'd like to hear solutions for, because if you're facing it, chances are another ag society has already found a way through it. Together, we tap into the collective experience in the room to share what's worked (and what hasn't) across agricultural societies, fairs, festivals, rodeos, and exhibitions. It's an energizing, collaborative hour where real stories spark real solutions, and everyone walks away with ideas they can put to work right away.

2:30pm – 3:45pm Session 3A Juniper Room
The Journey Towards a Zero-Waste Event
Moderator: Sheila Molloy, Executive Director, Coast Waste Management Association
Panelists:

- Sadie Fox (they/she) Ecopreneur of the Year 2024 and founder of The Sustainable Fox
- Heather MacLeod, founder of BC Crab Co. and producer of BC CrabFest
- Rhiannon Moore, Circular Economy Specialist for the City of Victoria
- Tim Scolnick, Specialist of waste and recycling management at major events

Nobody starts out knowing exactly how to run a zero-waste event. The people you will hear from in this great session figured it out at their own events — trying things, watching what happened, adjusting the next year. Others have spent years helping organizers across the region do the same.

Come learn how the journey actually goes, and how to get started — the reusable dishes, the sorting stations, the conversations with food vendors, the volunteer shifts that make or break the day. You'll get real numbers from real events, including the parts that didn't work the first time.

Bring questions and your own story. Whatever you've tried at your fair — the wins and the parts that fell apart — this is the session to talk about it.

6:00pm – 10:00pm **Cedar Room** **Friday Night Social and Dinner**
Decades Through the Years – Hosted by Alberni District Fall Fair
Activities coordinated by Inspired by Play and Bryan Burns

Program Schedule – Saturday, October 17 *Speakers and times are subject to change*

8:00am – 8:00pm Entry Foyer Registration Desk Open

8:45am - 9:00am Juniper Room Voting Delegate Registration

9:00am – 10:15am Juniper Room
116th Annual General Meeting of the BC Association of Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions

10:30am – 11:45am Session 4A Juniper Room
Top 10 Ways to Create Havoc at the Gates
Presented by Jason Roy, Co-founder of FrontDoor+

A fun countdown of the mistakes, oversights, and "we probably should have thought of that" moments that can make opening day harder than it needs to be. We'll look at real-life examples and easy fixes that can make the day smoother for guests, volunteers, and organizers.

10:30am – 11:45am Session 4B Poplar Room
Turning Impact Data into Action: Insights from the 2026 IAFE Community Impact Survey
Presented by Tim Carson, CEO, Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies

Join us for a look at the early results from the 2026 IAFE Community Impact Survey and a conversation about why impact data matters. We'll talk about how to gather and use this information to show your organization's value, share your story with stakeholders, and plan for what's next.

11:45am – 1:00pm Cedar Room It's A Carnival Affair Luncheon
Sponsored by West Coast Amusements & RF Hauser Shows

1:00pm – 2:15pm Session 5A Juniper Room
Protect the Legacy: A Behind-the-Scenes Fair Audit Workshop
Presented by Kryssie Thomson, Founder of Fair Systems That Work

Somebody in your organization knows how everything works. The forms, the phone numbers, the reason you always book that same supplier. It is all in their head and none of it is written down. Then they retire. Or get sick. Or finally have enough.

In this session we go looking for it. We find where your fair is strong, where it is strained, and who is quietly carrying knowledge nobody else has. Then I show you how to get it out of them and onto paper without making anyone feel pushed aside. That part matters, and most boards get it wrong. You will leave knowing what is working, what is at risk, and exactly where to start.

Your fair has lasted this long. Let's make sure it outlasts all of us.

1:00pm – 2:15pm Session 5B Poplar Room
Second Sitting – Round Table Discussions - *Table topics to be confirmed*.

2:30pm ***Silent Auction Closes***

2:30pm – 3:45pm Session 6A Juniper Room
Who's Next? Building the Volunteers Who Will Build the Future
Presented by Tim Carson, CEO, Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies

Every agricultural society and fair board eventually faces the same question: Who's next?

Succession isn't about replacing today's volunteers—it's about creating tomorrow's leaders before you need them. This engaging and practical session explores how organizations can attract new volunteers, bridge generations, develop future board members, and create a culture where people want to stay involved.

Discover why committees are the "secret sauce" of successful organizations, how mentorship transforms volunteers into leaders, and how intentional planning creates a legacy that grows stronger with every generation. Whether your organization has three volunteers or three hundred, you'll leave with practical ideas to recruit, retain, mentor, and inspire the people who will carry your fair into the future.

3:45pm Silent Auction Winning Bids will be posted – collect and pay for your purchases at the registration desk in the foyer.

6:00pm – 10:00pm Cedar Room President's Banquet