

Victoria 2010



Canadian Evaluation Society Annual Conference

May 2 – 5, 2010

Report of the Conference Organizing Committee

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- Russell Graham, Treasurer
- Lori Berndt, Local Arrangements
- Jacynthe Bouchard, Translations
- Yvon Dandurand, Program Chair
- Kylie Hutchinson, Thematic Breakfasts
- Helen Hsu, Student Case Competition
- Betty-Ann Lee, Marketing & Photography
- Brian McGowan, Marketing and Sponsorship Chair
- Bill Reid, Workshops
- Beth Snow, Volunteer Services Chair
- Diana Tindall, Evaluation
- Karen Truesdale, Green Team
- Kim Walker, Green Team
- Wendy Rowe, Chapter President
- Daphne Rintoul, Secretary

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Finally, we acknowledge the support of the CES National Council through start-up funding, Conference attendance, the advice of the CES Vice President as the liaison to the COC, and the patience you have shown in waiting for the release of this report.

Reed Early & Sandra Sellick
Conference Committee Co-Chairs

1 | Introduction

The British Columbia Chapter of the Canadian Evaluation Society (CESBC) hosted the 2010 CES Annual Conference in Victoria between May 2 and 5, 2010. The purpose of this report to CES National Council and future Conference organizers is to identify the key strengths and lessons learned during the planning for and hosting of the Conference. The Conference Co-Chairs are also willing to receive requests for additional information from readers of this report.

The key sources of data for this report include:

- Minutes of Conference Organizing Committee (COC) Meetings 2008 – 2010 (see Sample Agenda in Appendix A)
- Notes taken by Conference Co-Chairs during the 2010 Conference
- Bulletins (12) issued monthly leading up to the conference (see Appendix B)
- Notes taken by the Conference Secretariat during a meeting with Hotel and Victoria Conference Centre (VCC) staff on May 5, 2010
- Notes taken during a post-conference meeting of the COC, members' input to this report, and their feedback on a draft version of the report
- Results of an online evaluation with an electronic link e-mailed to Conference registrants one week after the conference.
- Results of a sponsor and exhibitor survey e-mailed to sponsors and exhibitors two weeks after the conference.

The report is organized in five sections including this introduction. The second section provides an overview of the 2010 Conference. The third section summarizes strengths of the Conference. The fourth section identifies lessons learned from the Conference that may assist future CES COCs. The fifth section provides some recommendations to the CES National Council.

2 | Profile of the 2010 CES Conference

2.1 - 2010 Conference Theme and Sub-themes

The theme of the 2010 CES Conference was “Going Green, Gold, and Global: New Horizons for Evaluation.” The rationale for this theme was as follows:

Going Green

Our “Green” theme relates broadly to evaluation in the context of managing positive environmental change including, for instance, the BC Government’s leadership role in greenhouse gas reduction, the US Government’s recognition of climate change reality, and the growing global awareness of climate change.

Going Gold

Our “Gold” theme reflects in part BC’s hosting of the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the impacts and effects of the associated programs, actions, and changes necessary to support and manage this event. Due to the current nature of the 2010 Winter Games, the focus was intended to include the challenges of outcome measurement, the determination of social and economic impacts, and the complex nature of evaluating interdependent, overlapping programs involving multi-level governing bodies. The gold theme also represents our collective work toward a “gold standard” in evaluation, including best practices, the implementation of the Joint Standards for Program Evaluation, and credentialing or certification programs.

Going Global

Our Global theme recognizes the importance of evaluation for all organizations involved internationally and in international development. Canada and BC play important roles internationally – BC is a key player in the Pacific Rim. Our “Global” theme provided a structure for the examination of programs and policies in the context of Canadian and provincial international connections. Furthermore, the theme encompasses evaluation activity in countries around the world including CES’s founding role in the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation.

New Horizons for Evaluation

In this developing and evolving field of evaluation, our “New Horizons” theme offered opportunities to explore emerging issues, controversies, new approaches, practices, and exemplars.

The calls for proposals (*Appendix A and B*) encouraged the submission of proposals that offered connections with one or more of the overall conference themes.

2.2 - 2010 Conference Objectives

The conference had eight qualitative objectives:

- To mitigate the impact of the global recession on professional development for public and private sector evaluators.
- To attract enough registrants to return a profit to CES National and the BC Chapter.
- To showcase uniquely British Columbian keynote speakers and sponsors.
- To provide a welcoming setting for Conference registrants, exhibitors, and sponsors and volunteers to socialize, network, disseminate information and learn.

- To provide a forum for the dissemination of information about credentialing to CES members.
- To draw new members to the CES.
- To invest in the future of evaluation practice in Canada through the involvement of students.
- To reduce the environmental footprint of the 2010 Conference.

The Conference was managed by a committee of 19 members. The COC did not meet face to face but operated as a virtual committee due the geographic distances between members and the need to keep travel expenses to a minimum. It is possible that the 2010 CES Conference was the first to be organized by a committee that operated on this basis. The composition of the COC included the positions of:

- Co-Chairs (2)
- Treasurer
- Recording Secretary
- BC Chapter President
- Program Chair
- Workshop Chair
- Marketing, Promotions and Sponsorship Chair
- Volunteer Chair
- Local Arrangements Chair
- Student Case Competition Chair
- Thematic Breakfasts Chair
- Conference Evaluation Chair
- Conference Footprint Co-Chairs "The Green Team" (2)
- Translations Chair
- Local Secretariat
- Members at Large (2)

The Program Chair, Local Arrangements Chair, and Workshop Chair worked with sub-committees involving other members of CES.

2.3 - Conference Context and Planning

CES National granted CESBC the privilege of organizing the 2010 Conference in 2005. The Provincial Executive Council of the CESBC secured the Victoria Conference Centre and the Fairmont Empress Hotel with a deposit in May 2007. Planning began in earnest with a meeting of the CESBC President, Treasurer, Secretary, National Representative, a Member at Large and the Conference Chair on April 18, 2008. Four of these Conference Committee members also met with Sue Ryan of the Willow Group in November 2008 to discuss the Willow Group's proposed contract with CESBC for 2010 Conference services. Subsequent negotiations reduced WG services and costs to an agreed level; the contract was signed at the Ottawa 2009 Conference.

Informal planning calls and correspondence began in September 2008. These grew into monthly teleconference calls as the Conference Committee grew and began following the critical path proposed by the Willow Group. Between September 2008 and February 2010, the size of the

Conference Committee grew steadily as planning intensified. During the 2009 Ottawa Conference, CES National hosted a meeting involving current and future Conference Planning Committees; this was attended by the 2010 Co-Chairs as well as the BC Chapter President.

The Co-Chairs expressed concerns about the potential affects on attendance from the economic downturn, H1N1 pandemic, and other factors. In hindsight, the main factors that seemed to impede conference registrations include the western location of the conference (as in distance from Ottawa); the global recession; reduced travel and professional development budgets within federal departments; and post-Olympic fiscal restraint by the BC provincial government.

The First Nation people on whose ancestral land the conference was held were represented by Greg Sam, an elder of the Tsartslip First Nation and Aboriginal Relations Coordinator for Royal Roads University, who assisted in opening the conference. Attendees were also exposed to local Aboriginal culture through the exhibit area and in the “West Coast Welcome” ticketed event held at the Royal BC Museum. Johnston Research Inc. made a significant contribution as a sponsor and contributor to the Aboriginal aspect of the conference.

The Conference Committee targeted both young and new evaluators through several initiatives:

- The first day’s keynote speaker was under 30
- Support for the student case competition and the silent auction in support of the CES Educational Fund
- Numerous entry-level workshops and presentations in the program
- A preferred registration rate for students, who also had the opportunity to attend the conference at no cost if they donated a few hours as volunteers
- Recruiting exhibitors offering educational opportunities in evaluation.

2.4 - Venue

The conference was held at the Victoria Conference Centre (VCC), a multi-storey complex of meeting rooms and theatres attached to the Fairmont Empress Hotel in Victoria’s Inner Harbour zone. The three main social activities held in conjunction with the conference (i.e. the CESEF silent auction and reception, the Queen of Diamonds cruise and the West Coast Welcome) were all located within a short walking distance of the venue. The Conference venue was rated very favourably in the post-conference evaluation.

2.5 - Catering

Daily continental breakfasts as well as morning and afternoon health breaks were included in the conference registration fee, as was the Tuesday awards luncheon and presidential addresses. The location of the conference centre in downtown Victoria provided many nearby options for other meals.

2.6 - Environmental Initiatives

Two members of the COC served as watchdogs and idea generators regarding the environmental footprint of the conference. Examples of their oversight included a digital alternative to a printed program; recycling boxes in presentation rooms; minimal packaging; and disposable serving ware for food service. The team also investigated the environmental practices of the convention centre and the option of carbon offsets for Conference registrants. No conference bags or other non-biodegradable items were distributed to delegates.

2.7 - Hospitality Features

The conference included an orientation session for new registrants on the Sunday evening just prior to the silent auction and reception organized by the CESEF. The auction was an opportunity for networking as well as a fundraiser. An appearance by the “Queen Elizabeth” character added a local novelty to the conference.

On Monday evening, the sponsored and ticketed West Coast Welcome was held in the Aboriginal galleries of the Royal BC Museum. Drummers, dancers, and storytellers provided a memorable welcome to the west coast for guests; a fashion show featured couture by an Aboriginal designer. A variety of appetizers was served.

Tuesday evening featured a cruise, sponsored and organized by R.A. Malatest and Associates, aboard the MV Queen of Diamonds. A cruise around Victoria harbour provided the backdrop for an evening of networking, informal dining, and entertainment. A hospitality suite with combined sponsorship was opened in the lower concourse of the VCC following the cruise.

Exercise opportunities were included in the program with yoga, walks, and runs scheduled each morning of the conference.

2.8 - General Financial Procedures

The COC opted to retain control over all payables, pay all invoices directly, and do our own bookkeeping, rather than contract Willow Group to carry out these functions. We retained our Chapter Secretariat Service for these tasks under the direction of the Treasurer. The bookkeeper ultimately dedicated about 200 hours to such financial matters. COC opened a separate, dedicated bank account for Conference use, which proved beneficial in providing a clear paper trail.

Under the rules dictated by CES National, Willow Group provided registration services for Conference delegates. WG also received all sponsorship contributions; this format effectively meant that WG carried out the receivables and revenue accounting functions on behalf of the COC.

With input from the various committee chairs, the Treasurer developed an operating budget. With an Excel spreadsheet format, this budget was both a management and control tool as well as an analytical tool that was valuable in calculating such things as break-even points for registrations, and sensitivity analyses for such items as registration fee amounts and scope of food/beverage services. The format provided by WG was a useful starting point; we developed additional analytic features as planning proceeded.

Table 1 | 2010 CES Conference Statistics at a Glance

| <i>Factor</i> | <i>2010</i> | <i>2009</i> |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Number of paid conference registrations | 358 | 648 |
| Number of complimentary registrations | 64 | 60 |
| Number of pre-conference workshop registrations | 101 | 236 |
| Number of post-conference workshop registrations | 37 | N/A |
| Total Conference Revenues Generated | \$264,525 | \$393,089 |
| Total Conference Profit | \$13,240 | \$96,000 |
| Number of new CES members | 72 | 347 |
| Number of Pre-Conference Workshops | 10 | 16 |
| Number of Post-Conference Workshops | 6 | N/A |
| Number of Panels & Papers | 150 | 118 |
| Number of Thematic Breakfast Roundtables | 12 | 14 |
| Number of sponsors | 28* | 10 |
| Total Revenue Generated by Sponsors | \$34,350* | \$13,270 |
| Total Number of Booths | 14 | 6 |
| CESEF Revenues | \$9,000.00 | \$6,504.50 |
| Total Number of Volunteers (including the COC) | 40 | 84 |

* Not including sponsored harbour cruise or in-kind contributions

3 | What Worked Well

3.1 - Overall

Overall, the COC felt that the 2010 Conference was successful in achieving its primary objectives. The program featured 16 workshops and over 150 presentations selected for their appeal to novice, mid-career, and experienced evaluators. The Victoria Conference Centre proved to be an efficient venue, and the program encountered few if any delivery problems. The timing was significant for the provision of specific information to support members in applying for the CES credentialing process. The venue was comfortable and well located. Food and beverage quality was generally good. The greeting and other Aboriginal-themed events honoured the rich culture of the area and provided an interesting west coast dimension to the proceedings. Evaluation survey results indicated that the vast majority of participants had positive views of the Conference. Finally, once all the bills were paid, the Conference generated a small profit.

3.2 - Conference Organizing Committee

COC members worked together in a very cohesive manner. The Program Chair position proved challenging to fill and to sustain; other positions saw virtually no turnover. The Committee started as a small group with members of the chapter council and grew as new positions were added and members volunteered to take on jobs. Access to the teleconference service provided by BC Government was critical for this as the COC, as a whole, had little possibility for face-to-face meetings.

Meetings were scheduled monthly from September 2008 to December 2009, twice monthly from January 2010 to March 2010, and then weekly until April 28. Agendas were brief (see *Appendix C* for an example); meetings started at 7:00PM and were kept to 60-90 minutes. The meeting schedule was provided several months in advance so members could plan accordingly. Minutes were kept at each meeting, usually by the Chapter Secretary, and distributed promptly. The Co-chairs were well aware that the Ottawa 2009 Conference secretariat accrued 55 hours of support to committees beyond those specified in their contract. We therefore kept the minutes function within the COC as a cost-saving measure.

The CESBC online discussion forum hosted by Circum Network Inc. was also useful for communication among COC and sub-committee members, and the Vice-President of CES National. Members used the forum to upload reports for reference by all committee members, debate proposals, gather feedback, and notify others of meetings.

3.3 - Registration

In accordance with CES National requirements, Conference registration was contracted to The Willow Group who reported to the COC in the weeks leading up to the conference.

Table 2 | Registration Fees for the 2010 Conference

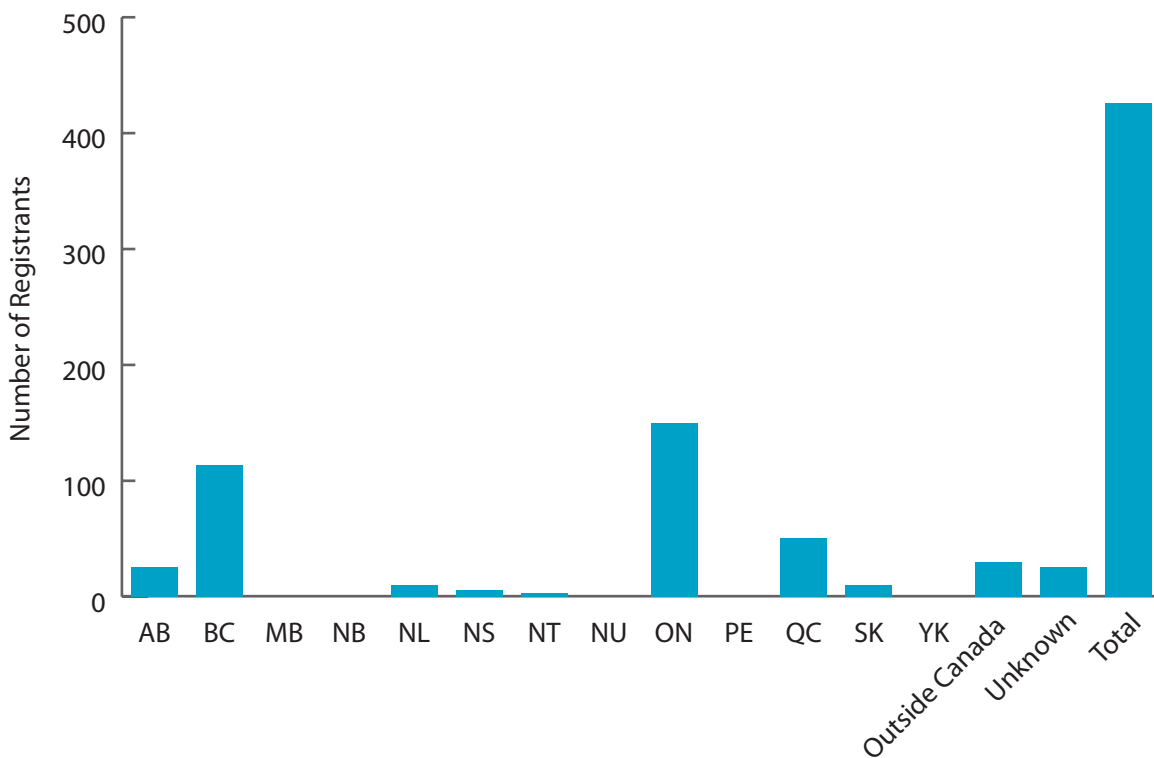
| | <i>On or before March 17, 2010</i> | <i>After March 17, 2010</i> |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Registration fees for the Conference (taxes not included)</i> | | |
| Regular CES or seniors members | \$475 | \$600 |
| Regular CES full time student members | \$275 | \$325 |
| Regular non members | \$632.14 | \$757.14 |
| Senior non members | \$560.71 | \$685.71 |

| | | |
|---|----------|----------|
| Student non members | \$332.14 | \$382.14 |
| Non-Canadian who is a Member of the American Evaluation Association | \$592.86 | \$717.86 |
| Non-Canadian who is a Member of the Australasian Evaluation Society | \$592.86 | \$717.86 |
| <i>Pre workshop fees (taxes not included)</i> | | |
| Regular CES or seniors members (full day) | \$200 | \$250 |
| Regular CES full time student members (full day) | \$100 | \$125 |
| Regular CES or seniors members (half day) | \$100 | \$125 |
| Regular CES full time student members (half day) | \$50 | \$62 |

The conference attracted 422 registrants, of which about 64 were given complimentary registrations in recognition of volunteer work, workshop presentations, or keynote roles. To encourage potential registrants on a tight budget, the COC established a basic price point \$25 less than the registration cost for the 2009 Ottawa Conference, as well as early bird incentives up to seven weeks prior to the conference (March 17) and other discounts.

Almost half of the participants in the conference came from BC and Ontario.

Table 3 | Place of Residence Distribution for 2010 CES Conference Registration



3.4 - Keynote Speakers and Panels

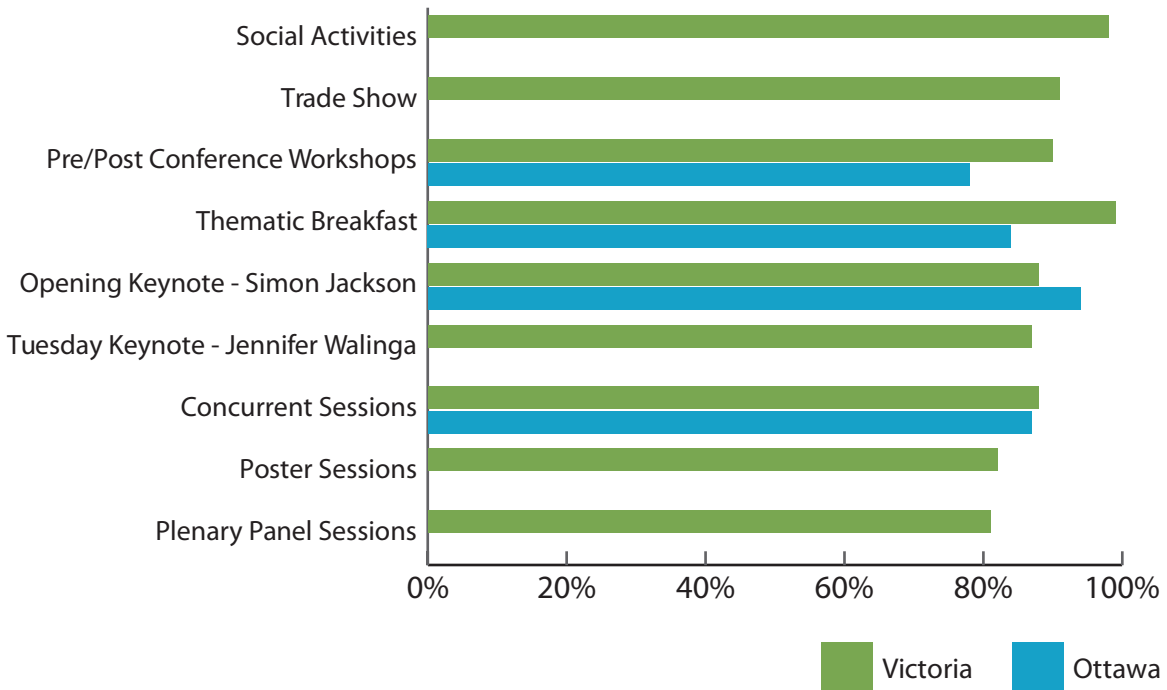
In recruiting two keynote speakers, we found success in engaging BC residents who were recommended to us as inspiring speakers. We focused on people who were willing to attempt connections between their passions and the interests of the evaluation community. To balance the themes of the keynote speakers – which had limited evaluation content – we scheduled carefully assembled panels with significant knowledge of evaluation to immediately follow the keynote addresses.

Issues faced in the recruitment of keynote speakers are addressed in Section 4: Lessons Learned.

Respondents to the post-conference evaluation survey provided highly positive ratings of the keynotes, with over 80% satisfied ratings for both speakers. Comments provided in the post-conference evaluation ranged from, "...inspirational speakers were a great addition to the program" and "engaging keynote speakers" to:

"I would not like to see so many key note speakers especially when they do not directly relate to the profession. Although these sessions did relate to the theme of the conference I personally and I know others who I spoke to attend the conference for professional development (sic). In other words to get hands on practical or technical ideas, tricks to help with day to day practice."

Table 4 | Satisfaction Ratings of Keynote Speakers and Panel



3.5 - Thematic Breakfasts

Thematic breakfasts were a complementary part of the conference program coordinated by a member of the COC. An invitation to propose, facilitate, and/or register for a thematic breakfast was posted on the conference website for several months. It was possible to see at a glance how many people had signed up for each breakfast. Thematic breakfasts were held on Tuesday of the conference. Participants simply picked up their buffet breakfast and met at a numbered round table in a designated conference room. Walk-in participants swelled the numbers of preregistered delegates at the tables. Discussions were animated and people would probably have lingered had time permitted. Feedback from registrants identified thematic breakfasts as a highlight of the 2010 Conference.

3.6 - Marketing

Conference marketing began at the 2009 Ottawa Conference. We set up a booth with daily prize draws for BC products and distributed Victoria 2010 badges and custom designed postcards featuring our bilingual logo, with an invitation to come to Victoria for the conference, as well as promotional literature provided by Tourism Victoria. For this promotion, it was necessary to have a logo 15 months ahead of the conference. The logo was developed through a graphic designer, and it worked well to “brand” the 2010 Conference.

A cornerstone of the marketing campaign was to have the conference link on the CES website up and running in October 2009. This early link enabled CES weekly digest announcements as Conference plans evolved. A second feature was the release of 12 electronic bulletins to CES members in BC over a 15-month period. The purpose of these bulletins was to raise awareness of the conference, promote registration, and solicit volunteers. A sample bulletin is included as *Appendix D*. We maximized provincial members’ participation with 105 BC member registrations including 37 new registrations, from a pre-conference membership of about 150 (although participation from non-members in the provincial government was disappointing). A third marketing initiative was the use of a comprehensive dissemination via listserves (EvalTalk, EDE-L, etc) on the websites of a dozen other organizations (see <http://evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=6&ss=4&lang=EN>). Finally, we made regular announcements to our BC members, past and current, through our provincial chapter website www.cesbc.ca.

3.7 - Volunteer Recruitment

A Chair of Volunteers joined the COC in March 2010 and worked hard to recruit additional people for Conference jobs. Volunteer roles included assisting Willow Group staff at the registration desk, serving as room runners, and various support tasks. About 24 volunteers worked at the conference; an additional 15 or so BC members, including COC members, were session hosts. Full-time students received complimentary registration in exchange for eight hours of volunteer service through the four days of the conference. Volunteers were recruited by word of mouth through the BC bulletins, on cesbc.ca, and through calls for volunteers posted at universities through the networking of COC members. The 2010 volunteer corps on site at the conference was about half the number recruited for the 2009 conference in Ottawa (84).

- The university population engaged in evaluation-related studies in the Victoria area is small.
- A Chair of Volunteers did not arrive until March 2010.
- The requirement of eight hours may have deterred some potential volunteers.

Having fewer volunteers meant that some rooms did not have moderators to introduce presenters and serve as timekeepers in sessions with more than one presenter scheduled. Survey respondents criticized the short times available to some presenters. More volunteer moderators – or fewer presenters – may have helped avoid this situation. We flag this issue for consideration by future conference organizers.

3.8 - Sponsorships

The Conference experienced strong commercial sponsorship with gross revenue of \$44,163 generated through agreements with 28 sponsors and exhibitors (see *Appendix E*). This is well in excess of the budgeted \$15,000. In addition, R.A. Malatest and Associates, a local consulting firm, made a significant in-kind donation by organizing and heavily subsidizing the dinner cruise event. Three other organizations made in-kind contributions and two Aboriginal artists were granted complimentary exhibitor space as part of the Conference's commitment to honouring West Coast Aboriginal culture and showcasing local craftsmanship for visiting registrants. Overall, there were 34 contributing organizations, of which 14 were exhibitors.

3.9 - Evaluation Surveys

An on-line survey was used to collect evaluation data approximately one week after the Conference. The survey was distributed to 419 (out of 422) registrants with email addresses, of whom 183 individuals participated in the pre/post-conference workshops. The response rate was high: 204 individuals responded, for an overall response rate of 49% and a workshop participant response rate of 43%.

Messages of thanks were sent to 29 primary contributing sponsors and exhibitors along with a survey to gain their perspectives and suggestions for improvement. The response rate was modest at 27.6%. Of the respondents, 87.5% indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the Conference. The three most common reasons for participating in the Conference were to (a) increase exposure or raise the profile of a product, service, or organization; (b) to support the evaluation profession; and (c) to network. Again, 87.5% of the respondents indicated that their Conference experience met or exceeded their expectations.

The evaluation report for the 2010 conference based on a post-conference survey is available to future Conference planners on request from either Co-Chair of the 2010 conference. Its 60 pages include chapters on methodology, data collection protocols, and quantitative data, as well as 30 pages of qualitative comments in response to open-ended questions.

4 | Lessons Learned

4.1 - Conference Organizing Service

We chose Willow Group (WG) as Conference secretariat. The firm has organized almost every CES conference and has a vast corporate history on which to draw. As the secretariat for CES National Council and the National Capital Chapter, WG has access to templates, forms, contacts and processes that no other potential organizer would enjoy. Because WG does not have a BC presence, however, we sought a local organizer in Victoria, although without success. COC representatives met with Sue Ryan of WG in November 2008 and eventually ironed out a contract.

There were challenges with Willow Group; for instance, (1) the delay in opening registrations, and the difficulties with the website; and (2) registration and financial information were slow to be delivered, and the ledgers were still not reconciled with our own until almost a year after the conference (both are described in greater detail below). Nevertheless, in day-to-day conference operations, we depended heavily on their help and they delivered sound operational advice.

Lesson Learned:

- Define expectations, individual responsibilities, and deadlines. Stick to them.

4.2 - Budget and Finance

This aspect of the conference proved to be the most challenging. We had to operate on an extremely tight budget and we had good reason to believe that in meeting all the criteria for a CES conference, we would still not achieve our projected break-even point of 340 paid registrations.

Lessons Learned:

- Ultimately, Conference 2010 earned a small profit of some \$13,000 (see *Appendix E*). This financial result comes from 358 paid registrations (an additional 64 registrations were complementary) as well as record high sponsorship contributions of more than (gross) \$44,000. This result was forecast prior to the event: the break-even number of registrants was projected to be in the range of 330-350 depending on certain assumptions about food and beverage costs. There were few surprises and they were minor: sponsorship contributions were higher than expected; Victoria Conference Centre costs were also higher than budgeted. The fact that the Conference break-even point is about 340 paid registrants should send a clear message both to CES National Council and to future hosts regarding the economics of hosting this event.
- The Conference management framework as established by CES National is heavily weighted towards using Willow Group as conference organizer. With WG controlling the registration function and providing the vast majority of direction on behalf of CES National, there is little if any opportunity to employ a local conference planner/organizer. Unless the COC is prepared to carry out most or all local functions through volunteers, the only realistic option is to contract with WG for these services. This situation places the COC at a severe disadvantage, particularly early in the planning process when members are trying to determine how much work can be done by volunteers, and how much should be contracted out to a professional – all in a situation where COC members have very limited knowledge about Conference organizing requirements. While WG displayed understanding and flexibility in this situation, it made for an awkward negotiating environment.
- The CES National/WG role regarding revenues needs to be clarified. WG initially assumed “control” of all Conference revenues; they transferred funds to the COC bank account only

when requested. Upon submitting its first invoice, WG informed the COC that the amount would simply be deducted from the amounts to be deposited to our account. We did not accept this practice, and subsequently worked out a procedure that reflected WG's role as holding COC funds in trust for COC. Unfortunately, the CES Conference Manual is silent in addressing this situation, which in large part led to the confusion.

- Revenue reports were slow to arrive, and resolving various revenue-related questions seemed to take an inordinate amount of time. The CES annual audit was launched in late 2010, as we were preparing the financial statements. Since the audit included Conference transactions, we waited for the results of the audit before preparing the final financial statement. The wait was worthwhile because the audit clarified several issues that had been outstanding between WG and the COC.
- The commissions charged by WG for registration services seem high. Registration and credit card charges amounted to about \$25/person, and in total cost more than \$11,000. This seems high for a function that should be almost totally automated.
- A delegation of some 14 people from Great Britain attended the Conference. The delegates registered as a group online in the usual manner, yet somehow this escaped Willow Group's – and hence the Organizing Committee's – attention. Much to our chagrin, we did not become aware of this far-off group until audit inquiries uncovered the reason for a mysterious bank transfer from a British firm to WG and the Conference bank account.
- Extras and add-ons appeared in WG invoices that took a great deal of time to address. Change orders to the original contract were not always issued in writing and it was difficult to track the authorization for some claims. An early discussion suggested that (1) WG sometimes took action in order to meet deadlines without obtaining authorization; and (2) "authority" may have come informally from members of the COC who did not have budget authority to approve additional services.

4.3 - Program Chair and Committee

4.3.1 Conference Title and Themes

Setting the conference title and themes was done early in order to have promotional materials out for the 2009 conference. However, theme development in order to populate the conference website and launch the call for proposals was an iterative process that occurred over a period of almost six months. In the absence of continuity in program chair's role, the themes needed to be revisited and revised by each program chair. This process enriched the development of the themes but caused delays in developing the call for proposals.

Lesson Learned:

- The conference chair(s) and the program chair(s) need to establish the process and a deadline for developing the title and themes early in the planning process.

The title and themes of the Conference provided ample scope for applicants. On closer examination many proposals were not explicitly related to a theme, although a theme had been listed. Nevertheless the content of these proposals looked good and, since we had space for them, we accepted them. The evaluation report indicated that having a conference theme was not as important as having streams of concurrent sessions such as best practices, evolving practices, introductory evaluation skills, advanced evaluation practices, and evaluation experiences.

Lesson Learned:

- Include a section in the call for proposals requiring proponents to articulate the relationship between their proposed workshops or papers and the conference theme(s).

4.3.2 Keynote Speakers

More than 35 names were put forward for keynote/invited speakers and panelists. After much protracted discussion, volleys of emails, and belaboured budget debates, 24 persons were recruited. The amount paid to each varied considerably. In lieu of fees, a basic honorarium of \$500 was proposed to invited presenters. Some could not accept it, ethically or because of employer's rules. Others were offered more, either because they wouldn't come for less, or as an incentive. All registration fees for invitees were waived, and flights and hotel fares were reimbursed whenever it would facilitate acceptance of the offer, provided their employer was not paying.

A table similar to the one below was used to track and tally the progress on the speakers list as it evolved.

Table 5 | Conference Evaluation Ratings

| <i>Speaker/Panel</i> | <i>Fee</i> | <i>Expenses</i> | <i>Actual</i> | <i>Budget</i> | <i>Status</i> | <i>Hotel Nights</i> | <i>Bio</i> |
|--|------------|--|---------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|---|
| Message from the CES President, Francois Dumaine | 0 | None – he is here for CES Council, Reg covered | \$ 0.0 | \$0 | Confirmed Dec 2010 | 0 | http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?en:49:7 |

Lessons Learned:

- It would be useful to identify in advance a protocol and rationale regarding compensation and reimbursement of expenses for invited presenters.
- It may be impossible to design a program that pleases everyone. Keynote speakers who inspire one segment of registrants will fail to impress others. There are marked divisions among participants who want to be exposed to the wisdom of iconic evaluators and those who want to be exposed to the work and wisdom of regional leaders and/or evaluation experts. There are also divisions among participants who seek instruction on evaluation methodology; take in heated debates on evaluation policy; or hear panels that provide multiple perspectives on evaluation issues. Don't waste time trying to find keynotes who will appeal to everyone. Include an opportunity for participants to recommend speakers, panel topics, or issues that they would like to see featured at future conferences, and relay this information to appropriate organizers.
- Panels were very popular with respondents on the online survey. A panel summarizing the conference on the last day is a good program component, especially if it is assigned to the final slot on the Conference schedule.
- Participants appeared to appreciate opportunities to hear speakers from other countries and continents. This is something to consider when inviting speakers as keynotes or panel members.

4.3.3 Calls for Proposals

The call for proposals went out later than the critical path recommended. This was, in part, due to several changes in the position of Program Chair. There were no significant changes in the call for proposals for the 2010 Conference, compared with 2009, other than the definition of the Conference themes. The COC several times extended the deadline for proposals when the targeted number did not arrive. A history of extensions in past conferences may have led some proponents to delay their submissions.

Lessons Learned:

- Ideally, the call for proposals should close at least nine months ahead of the conference in order to provide ample time for the review of the proposals, correspondence with proponents, scheduling, and the design and printing of the program.
- The due date for proposals should include a specific closing time (hour) with time zone indicated. West Coast proponents submitting proposals on the evening that the proposals were due found that they were unable to access the online link after 9:00 PM because the system was located three time zones away.

4.4 - Program Scheduling

A recurrent theme in the online survey responses was a preference for themes or streams that would allow evaluators at different points in their careers or engaged in different kinds of evaluation practice to tailor their Conference experiences. There was general agreement that there were many good choices during concurrent sessions at the 2010 Conference. When the program was organized, a conscious effort was made to schedule a range of options in each time slot but participants indicated that the streams could have been more overtly scheduled. Some participants complained about the need to move from room to room because the papers grouped within a single room during a concurrent session were not all of equal interest or relevance to participants.

Another suggestion that emerged several times in the survey responses was for fewer sessions and larger rooms. It would appear that at a conference of this size, having nine or ten concurrent sessions resulted in some rooms having only a handful of participants while other rooms were overflowing because they were too small. Another point made in the online surveys was that some potential registrants need to be able to identify the sessions they will be attending for their employers in order to justify time and/or funding to attend the conference. This information is needed at least six months to a year ahead of the conference.

The thematic breakfast was well attended and highly rated by respondents to the online survey following the Conference.

Lessons Learned:

- Get the initial call for proposals out close to a year before the conference. Set the closing date for proposals nine months ahead of the conference to allow three months for their evaluation and six months for their publication ahead of the conference. Be very selective in accepting proposals for presentations. Aim for fewer presentations for concurrent sessions in a conference of this size.
- Build in several different streams to accommodate the diversity of needs and interests among evaluators.
- Ensure that presentations booked for rooms with multiple presentations during a concurrent session will have shared interest for a segment of the registrants attending.
- Ensure there will be a moderator in every room that will have more than one paper presented during a concurrent session.
- Consider scheduling more than one thematic breakfast during the conference in order to capitalize on the popularity of this event.

4.5 - Registration, Withdrawal, and Cancellation

Learning from the 2009 Ottawa Conference, our call for proposals explicitly stated that registration fees were not waived for presenters. Also, our cancellation policy clearly stated “Refunds will be given for requests received in writing postmarked no later than April 2, 2010, less an administration fee of \$50.00. After that date, we regret no refunds will be issued; however, we will accept substitute delegates.” Despite this statement, some confirmed presenters withdrew rather than pay the registration fee. We also had registrants appeal for refunds based on personal circumstances; these cases were considered by the Co-chairs on a case-by-case basis.

Lesson Learned:

- It is important to continue these policies, which are consistent with past years. It may be helpful to have a check box on the online registration that requires the registrant to acknowledge having read and accepted the policy. A similar checkbox could be included when proponents submit proposals.

4.6 - Sponsorships

The survey of sponsors indicated that they particularly liked the following features:

- Exposure and profile opportunities, especially the thanks to sponsors at plenary sessions and large announcements of sponsors for events
- General traffic flow that brought booth browsers to the tables of exhibitors, as well as the length of the refreshment breaks that allowed time for registrants to visit the tables
- Networking opportunities during conference breaks and social activities
- Flexibility and support from the Conference organizers in accommodating last minute requests and providing a copy of the conference program
- Social events, particularly the dinner cruise.

The survey also elicited suggestions for enhancing the sponsors’ experience at future conferences. From this item, we learned that:

- There could have been clearer advance communication with sponsors regarding when tables could be set up and when they had to be taken down
- A more secure place was needed to store display exhibit equipment overnight
- The levels of sponsorship and their benefits could have been better defined
- Sponsors preferred that social events not be scheduled to overlap with each other.

In lieu of paying WG a straight fee as per the original proposal, we opted to pay a commission of 30% on sponsorships they secured. COC members also secured new sponsorships, so that the net proceeds were \$34,350, which significantly offset the cost of hosting the conference.

Lessons Learned:

- Contact all sponsors from previous conferences.
- There is benefit to organizing a brainstorming session to identify new potential sponsors.
- Look for local and regional sponsors to add diversity to the exhibition hall.

4.7 - CES Website and Conference Pages

We planned to build the 2010 Victoria Conference website from the same structure as Ottawa 2009 in order to reduce development costs and provide a familiar user interface for registrants. The CES webmaster, Benoît Gauthier, initially said he had insufficient time to rebuild our website to an acceptable standard. After other options were investigated without success, and feelings of desperation arose, Benoît graciously agreed to serve as webmaster at no cost if the COC would limit the frequency of requests and submit them only through a designated contact at WG. A few weeks later, the website was ready to go public. However, the COC was left without direct input to the website: no one could correct errors, make additions, or update a page without going through WG.

Lessons Learned:

- Keep past conference websites alive in subsequent years as a reference for future conference organizers
- The COC should obtain a written agreement for website services early, and have a clear process for editing the website.
- The COC must recognize and anticipate the hidden costs of delays without direct access to the website or the webmaster by a designated COC member.
- Ideally, Conference participants would like the full program to be posted on the website months ahead of the conference in order to plan which sessions they will attend.

4.8 - Venue

In general, the response to the VCC and the Fairmont Empress Hotel was very good. The COC had taken the precaution of booking a nearby hotel with rooms at a more economical rate in the event that the conference hotel sold out, which proved to be a prudent move. While some respondents praised the calibre of the rooms at the Fairmont Empress, some also indicated that the conference rate of approximately \$200 per night was too high. When booking rooms for the hotel, economy and proximity are more important for some registrants than being on site.

There was some criticism of the VCC based on room temperature with overheating being mentioned in several responses to the online surveys and experienced by members of the COC. When fans were brought in or hallway doors were opened noise was introduced to the rooms that participants found distracting. Some respondents to the online survey mentioned that they found the chairs in the presentation rooms too hard.

Lessons Learned:

- It is wise to block book more than one hotel in order to offer different price points and levels of accommodation.
- Predicting how many registrants will choose to stay at the Conference hotel(s) is difficult. In the early negotiations with the Conference hotel, likely years in advance, it is best to aim for a sliding scale based on number of registrations with a clause enabling adjustment as the Conference date approaches.
- When making venue arrangements, sit in the chairs that will be provided to assess their comfort for participants.
- Identify a designated go-to person representing the venue for registration desk staff to contact regarding room temperature, noise, and other problems throughout the conference.
- It is important to delegates to have at least one person at the registration desk at all times

throughout the conference. This was praised in the online survey responses based on the 2010 Conference.

4.9 - Catering

Participants evaluated the catering very favourably with a few suggestions for the inclusion of lunch each day, more healthy choices, a lighter meal at the awards luncheon, less meat, fewer carbohydrates, more nuts and cheese, better food, more food, more snacks, better snacks, and an earlier finish to the CESEF silent auction and opening reception to allow time for participants to go out to dinner. The online survey data also included the suggestion of a list of local restaurants within walking distance.

Lessons Learned:

- Catering costs constitute a large expense for the conference. Including lunch each day would necessitate an increase in registration costs or a huge increase in registrations to offset food costs. While it would be popular to include lunch each day, it is not feasible to do so.
- Try to accommodate the needs of people on vegan, vegetarian and gluten-free diets when establishing the catering plan; and introduce some variety each day in the morning snacks.
- Include a local area map with suggestions for breakfast, lunch, and dinner within a .5 km radius of the conference venue. Include the price range for each suggestion.

4.10 - Environmental Initiatives

The online survey data indicated general appreciation of the environmentally friendly aspects of the conference. Suggestions included a small, printed program with a map of the venue, and a recyclable cloth bag for use at the conference.

4.11 - Translation

It was challenging to establish procedures and budget for the translation of all written text, major panels, and keynote addresses for the conference website and the program; these proved time consuming and expensive. The COC had one person on the committee who assisted with our translation work on a voluntary basis as time permitted but it was very difficult to budget for translation when establishing our working budget. Also, delays occurred in getting translation completed, which contributed to further delays in posting announcements on the Conference website. It was difficult to post regular updates and to release information as it became available. Simultaneous translation at the conference was also an expensive – although anticipated – item.

Lessons Learned:

- Translation services are likely to be more expensive and more time-consuming than anticipated when setting the budget and critical path. Volunteers may reduce costs but time will be a factor. Contracted translation services are expensive and may also be more time-consuming than anticipated.
- The need to translate all Conference publications must be weighed against the desire to revise, edit, and release updates.

4.12 - Conference Report

The conference report was modelled on the report for the 2009 conference in order to meet the standard set for the preceding conference. However, it was delayed for almost a year due to the resolution of financial aspects of the conference; the volume of evaluation data collected; and other commitments of the Co-Chairs following the conclusion of the Conference. For this reason, the report was of no use to the COC for 2011 and will be of limited use for the 2012 conference.

The intense time commitment required to Chair/Co-Chair a CES annual conference over a period of two to three years cannot be understated. Conference planning by people with full-time jobs can take a toll.

Lessons Learned:

- Future Chairs of COCs need to recognize the time required for conference organization and follow-up. Fulfilling the role while working full-time will be a challenge and result in compromises (such as the delivery time for the report) unless other provisions are made.
- The format of the conference report should be much briefer, perhaps 10-12 pages.

When the evaluation strategy for the conference is planned, it is important to bear in mind that the COC will not likely plan another CES conference. Feedback concerning the strengths and weaknesses of speakers, panels, and presentations of the conference; the venue; or the themes have limited value for next year's organizers.

5 | Recommendations to National Council

The COC recommends that National Council:

5.1 - Review profit expectations of the annual conference in light of current costs and the criteria established by National for the conference (e.g., registration costs, complimentary registrations, translation services, the award luncheon).

5.2 - Review the current arrangements around the use of the CES Secretariat in organizing the national conference, with a view to reducing costs, streamlining procedures, and providing greater flexibility to host Chapters. If the Secretariat continues to play a significant role in conference organization on behalf of CES National, define that role in the Secretariat's annual contract and pay the costs from the National budget, rather than "downloading" the costs to conference host committees.

5.3 - Ensure that the CES Secretariat's role in revenue matters is defined as custodial, and that all conference revenues are to be held in trust on behalf of the organizing committee and forwarded in their entirety as soon as feasible.

5.4 - Continue to include in the Vice-President's role responsibility for liaison with the annual COC. It was very helpful to have this link to National throughout the planning process.

Appendices

- A: Call for Workshop Proposals**
- B: Call for Presentation Proposals**
- C: Sample Planning Committee Agenda**
- D: Sample Bulletin to BC Members**
- E: Financial Statement**

Appendix A | Call for Workshop Proposals

Call for Professional Development Workshop Proposals

Professionals that oversee, are engaged in carrying out, and work to advance policy and program change through evaluations are invited to submit a proposal(s) for the conduct of professional development workshops at the Canadian Evaluation Society's 2010 National Conference.

What Are the Themes and Potential Topics for Contemplation?

The theme for the 2010 conference, which will take place over May 2nd to 5th at the Victoria Conference Centre and Fairmont Empress Hotel on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, is: Going Green, Gold and Global: New Horizons for Evaluation. The broader context is that of a field of practice that continues to develop and evolve, and that provides value to all levels of the public service as much as non-profit and for-profit sectors. Given this, and the three sub-themes, workshop topics can reflect such experiences with evaluation as:

- Addressing environmental stewardship and sustainability related matters, with climate change being a prominent consideration in this sense.
- Demonstrating progress in, and successes with, inter-dependent, complex initiatives that involve many governing bodies, such as the hosting of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- Building and learning from international connections in policies and programs, with an example being the strengthening of economic ties in the Pacific Rim.

An expansive view of evaluation can also be taken, including planning (e.g., building and adopting frameworks), performance measurement, periodic assessments and reviews, and reporting on results.

What Is Expected in the Way of Workshop Formats and Timing?

The workshops are expected to be hands-on, interactive sessions that provide opportunities to gain knowledge and expertise over either:

- A full day, timed from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm with lunch included; or
- A half-day, timed for 9:00 am to 12:00 noon, or 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

These sessions will either precede the conference by taking place on Sunday, May 2nd, or will follow the event on the afternoon only of Wednesday, May 5th, 2010.

Workshops can be delivered in the language of the submission, and presenters are expected to be good communicators as well as have significant experience in the chosen subject area. While a data projector and screen will be provided along with a limited number of laptops if needed, all other equipment must be ordered in advance and paid for by the presenters.

How Will Workshop Proposals be Judged?

Workshop proposals will be selected on the basis of:

1. The level of experience and knowledge of the presenter(s); and
2. The relevance and potential usefulness of the workshop content

What Should Workshop Proposals Contain?

Within a maximum of three pages, a proposal should indicate:

- The requisite level of knowledge for participants (beginner, intermediate, advanced);
- The topic(s), learning objectives and approach to be taken in delivery of the workshop;
- Any unique aspects to the proposed focus and content for the workshop, as well as whether this has been presented previously.
- The name(s) and affiliation(s) of the presenter(s), as well as a biography for each up to a maximum of 150 words.

Note that not all proposals will necessarily be accepted.

What is the Deadline for Submission?

All proposals must be submitted by Thursday, December 31st, 2009, to the attention of Sue Ryan of the Willow Group care of: susan.ryan@thewillowgroup.com.

Will Compensation be Provided for Presenters?

Workshop presenters will not be paid for their contribution including travel, but will be exempted from the conference registration fees as follows:

- One (1) complimentary registration for a half-day workshop.
- Two (2) complimentary registrations for a full-day workshop (on the assumption of there being two presenters).

How Can I Learn More?

You can call (613) 725-2526, (613) 725-2526, or you can reach a member of the CES Conference 2010 Committee through the Web site www.cesbc.ca.

Appendix B | Call for Presentation Proposals

Call for Presentations

Evaluation professionals and other potential presenters are invited to submit proposal(s) for a presentation for the Canadian Evaluation Society 2010 National Conference. The theme for this year's Conference is "Going Green, Gold, and Global: New Horizons For Evaluation".

Types of Presentations

Presentations will be made at the Conference. As indicated below, they may be in the form of papers, posters, panels, etc. See the list of formats and definitions. Each session is expected to have the following time allotment that includes discussion:

- Paper Presentation: 20 or 30 minutes
- Panel: 45 or 90 minutes
- Debate: 90 minutes
- Roundtable: 45 minutes
- Poster: Standing displays at designated locations

Presentation Selection Criteria

Presentations will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Consistency with Conference themes;
- Experience and knowledge of presenter(s);
- Relevance and potential usefulness of presentations for delegates; and,
- Number of presentations per presenter.

Special consideration will also be given to presenters who propose joint presentations with less experienced presenters. Not all proposals will be necessarily accepted.

Guidelines for Submitting Presentation Proposals

Proposals will only be admissible if submitted through the proposal submission system. THE DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS IS JANUARY 11, 2010.

Presentation proposals must include the following:

- Title of the presentation.
- Two to three keywords that best describe the presentation proposal.
- Conference theme addressed by your presentation.
- Type of presentation.
- Names, affiliations and email addresses of all presenters (or discussants for panels).
- Presenter's or organizer's complete mailing address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address.

- Abstract (up to 150 words for poster, and up to 300 words for a debate, panel, or roundtable.).
- Biographies of all presenters (up to 300 words each).
- Language of presentation.

Please note that a data projector, laptop and screen will be provided. All other equipment must be ordered in advance and paid for by presenters. Presentation and poster guidelines will be provided with notification of acceptance. Also note that, considering the benefits of attending the Conference, all presenters will be required to pay the Conference registration fees.

Appendix C: Sample Planning Committee Agenda

CES 2010 COC

7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Wed. October 14, 2009

Conference Call: X-XXX-XXX-XXXX

Conference ID XXXXXXX#

Conference Committee:

| | |
|--|--|
| Conference Co-Chair – Sandra Sellick, Kelowna | Local Arrangements Chair – Lori Berndt, Victoria |
| Conference Co-Chair – Reed Early, Duncan (Meeting Chair) | Student Case Competition Chair – Helen Hsu, Vancouver |
| Treasurer – Russell Graham, North Vancouver | Thematic Luncheons Chair – Kylie Hutchinson, Sunshine Coast |
| CESBC Secretary – Tammy Bennett, Vancouver | Conference Evaluation Chair – Diana Tindall, Vancouver |
| PEC President – Wendy Rowe, Victoria/ Bellingham | Translations – Jacynthe Bouchard, Victoria |
| Program Chair – In Transition | Green Conference – Donna Carrigan |
| Workshop Chair – Bill Reid, Victoria | Betty -Ann Lee |
| Marketing and Promotions Chair – Brian McGowan, Vancouver | Karen Truesdale |
| Sponsorship Chair – Volunteer Needed/ Interim | Lisa O'Reilly |
| Ad Hoc Committee | Daphne Rintoul |

1. Call to Order, Check In and Additional Agenda Items
2. Adoption of the Minutes for the Aug. 12 & Sept. 16 Meetings
3. Treasurer's Report - Russ
4. Committee Chair Reports
 - a) Program C'tee
 - b) Workshop C'tee – Bill
 - c) Marketing and Promotions C'tee – Brian
 - d) Sponsorship C'tee – Ad Hoc Committee (Betty-Ann, Brian, Donna, Karen & Sandra)
 - e) Local Arrangements C'tee – Lori
 - f) Student Case Competition C'tee – Helen
 - g) Student Paper Competition – Lisa
 - h) Thematic meals C'tee – Kylie
 - i) Translations C'tee – Jacynthe
5. Other items?
6. Upcoming COC Meetings: Wed. 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Nov. 18; Dec. 9
7. Adjournment

Appendix D | Sample Bulletin to BC Members



Canadian Evaluation Society

Annual Conference

MAY 2 – 5, 2010

The conference is now less than six months away and momentum is building.

The three key themes of the 2010 conference will be

Going Green – Evaluating environmental initiatives;

Going Gold – The role of evaluation in events on the Olympic scale and gold standards in evaluation; and

Going Global – International initiatives and new horizons in evaluation and for evaluators.

Simon Jackson, founder of the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition, will be our Monday keynote speaker.

We are still looking for suggestions for professional organizations with newsletters, journals, or listserves that would advertise the 2010 conference at no cost. Please forward suggestions to 2010marketing@evaluationcanada.ca

We are also eager to receive leads for sponsors and exhibitors for the conference. Think outside the box. 2010 Conference information is available at

<http://www.cesbc.ca>

CESBC 2010 Conference Countdown Bulletin 7

November 2009

From the Conference Co-Chairs – Sandra and Reed



Calling all workshop presenters! The **call for conference workshop proposals** closes Dec. 11. Please visit www.cesbc.ca for details.

Workshops will be offered on Sun. May 2 *and* Wed. May 5. The **call for conference presentation proposals** will be out as soon as the conference website is open at c2010.evaluationcanada.ca. We are currently looking for volunteers to **coordinate early morning fitness activities** (e.g., running, walking, yoga and/or bootcamp) and **late night hospitality suites**. To volunteer for any of these roles, please contact the co-chairs at 2010chair@evaluationcanada.ca.

2010 CES Conference Committee

2010 Co-Chairs – Reed Early and Sandra Sellick

CESBC President – Wendy Rowe

Treasurer – Russell Graham

Secretary – Tammy Bennett

Sponsorship –Position Open

Program – Yvon Dandurand

Workshops – Bill Reid

Local Arrangements – Lori Berndt

Thematic Events – Kylie Hutchinson

Marketing & Promotion – Brian McGowan

Student Case Competition – Helen Hsu

Translations – Jacynthe Bouchard

Conference Eco-Advisors – Karen Truesdale & Kim Walker

Sub-Committee members: Brad Anastos, Joanne Barry, Donna Carrigan, Geeta Cheema, Debbie DeLancey, Janice Duddy, Brad Gerhart, Betty-Ann Lee, Richard Lloyd, Jim McDavid, Lisa O'Reilly, Daphne Rintoul, and Ken Stephenson.

