

# 2ND ANNUAL **TOURISM** SYMPOSIUM

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2020 | **10AM TO 12PM**



**Rediscover**  
TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS



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## PREMIER'S GREETINGS FOR TOURISM ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS MONTH AND 2ND ANNUAL TOURISM SYMPOSIUM (2020)



Hon. Sharlene Cartwright Robinson

I am pleased as Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands to join the Ministry of Tourism in celebrating the annual Tourism and Environmental Awareness Month.

Tourism is the economic engine of the Turks and Caicos Islands and our environment is an important contributor to our country's growing arrival numbers each year. Although this year the Turks and Caicos Islands would have experienced, due to the coronavirus pandemic, a disruption in our usual number of arrivals into the destination, we are happy that we were still able to safely welcome our visitors back into the country following the reopening of our borders.

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism have done remarkably well in completing extensive consultations with our tourism stakeholders to ensure that our pre-travel entry requirements encompassed all factors of safeguarding the general public and our visitors.

This year's Tourism Symposium keynote address, 'Challenges and Opportunities: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic' is a realistic reflection of the plight of many countries in the region including the Turks and Caicos Islands, as navigating this pandemic is indeed a challenging but opportunistic undertaking. I firmly believe that all challenges present opportunities for positive change. This is new and uncharted territory for countries all over the world and despite this, the Turks and Caicos Islands Government is keen to explore the best practices and methodologies from across the region and internationally, in order to ensure that the TCI Tourism industry continues to not just survive but thrive beyond this pandemic.

I would like to express my excitement on the launch of this year's Tourism and Environmental Awareness Month of activities and would like to extend greetings and congratulations to the Turks and Caicos Islands Tourist Board on their second annual Tourism Symposium.

May it be yet another successful year of education and raising awareness for our Tourism market and our natural environment and I look forward to what the Tourist Board has planned for the remainder of the month.



## MESSAGE FROM MINISTER OF TOURISM, ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE, GAMING AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT



Hon. Ralph Higgs

The coronavirus pandemic has and continues to reshape our beautiful Turks and Caicos Islands and the world at large. During times of crisis, such as the one we are living through now, we as human beings develop a sense of fear, helplessness and hopelessness. Our way of life has certainly become different, through the wearing of face coverings and social distancing practices, but our ability to withstand and navigate through these unprecedented times remain steadfast.

During these times it may become harder to visualize the bigger picture and we may miss the endless possibilities that a crisis can bring. The theme “Rediscover Turks and Caicos”, chosen to celebrate Tourism Environmental Awareness Month 2020, is quite fitting, as it encourages us to embrace the latitude of starting afresh and familiarizing ourselves with our own product; from the luscious green Twin Islands, the fishing capital of South Caicos, the warmth hospitality of Grand Turk and Salt Cay, to the award winning Grace Bay beach on Providenciales, there is much to be rediscovered.

The pandemic may have caused us to reorganize, rethink and reconsider plans for 2020; it may have changed the way we do business as usual but one thing remains untouchable is our Tourism product. Turks and Caicos is known for its resilience, we have managed, on a daily basis to adapt and flourish during these times of uncertainty. This is evident by the increase in local entrepreneurship and successfully managed re-opening of our borders.

There is much to see, much to do and much to savor; I encourage all of us, explore, be a tourist in your country; let's rediscover Turks and Caicos together.





## MESSAGE FROM PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TOURISM, ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE, GAMING AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT



Cherylann Jones

My Tourism Colleagues and Partners, I am so happy to be given this opportunity to extend greetings at this milestone conference being held during our flagship annual event; Tourism and Environmental Awareness Month.

I want to congratulate the Tourist Board for hosting this event despite the challenges of COVID 19. Worldwide, countries continue to be impacted with mandatory quarantines, airports closures and other measures to manage this pandemic. These have caused many activities to be delayed, re-configured or simply cancelled. I congratulate you and your decision to continue these celebrations in these times.

Like the rest of the world, the Turks and Caicos Islands has had its challenges, however we acted early with stakeholder consultations, the develop-

ment of a comprehensive set of industry and country protocols including social distancing and wearing of masks. These measures also included a careful national testing strategy, a measured re-opening of our borders to international travel and the introduction of our pre-arrival screening program. With these measures we were able to manage risks of COVID-19 importation and national spread. Ultimately we were able to have our country removed from several international travel warning lists. Consistency, commitment and adherence by most of the population were critical success factors.

This year the theme for Tourism and Environmental Awareness Month is 'Rediscover Turks and Caicos'. What a suitable theme, so indicative of what is happening with tourism all over the world. Rediscovering, renewing, looking elsewhere, and finding that which is new. Travel and tourism are industries that experienced the greatest impact. Experts say it will take years to rebound. On the other hand, innovation and initiative abounds as countries are asked to respond in new ways, with new ideas to keep the industry alive, relevant and safe. Especially Caribbean countries who depend heavily on North America and Europe regions that do not have an impressive record for managing the pandemic.

This theme is an opportunity for us to look inward and explore what others come to enjoy over the years. It also is an opportunity for new markets to see us in our entirety. We are taking advantage of the crisis- what an opportunity!

The panel discussion itself expands on the theme of sustainability and rediscovery and emphasizing the importance of initiatives to sustain our heritage and culture and to ultimately enhance our brand. There is no doubt that our culture is an important element of our tourism product and is a way of distinguishing from others in this highly competitive industry.

We at the Ministry are pleased to be associated with this conference, we congratulate the Turks and Caicos Tourist Board for their foresight. We are thankful for the partnerships that made it possible.

Here in Turks and Caicos we witness the strength of partnerships with the Ministry of Health, TCHTA, airlines, and other partners and stakeholders. We were able to secure the Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council, and with our TCI Assured program and TCI Safe initiative we have proven our commitment to ensuring we are - and remain - a safe and welcoming jurisdiction through this pandemic.

This industry is expected to continue as the vehicle of economic development into the next decade, creating employment, and justifying infrastructure development in the Turks and Caicos Islands. At the same time COVID-19 emphasizes the need for diversification of industries, markets and initiatives as a way of safeguarding our future. We will do so in the safest way, protecting our islands, our product and our people.

I wish all the participants and facilitators a very fruitful day and I look forward to innovative presentations and lively discussions that can further add to our strategic tourism initiatives.

## MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS TOURIST BOARD



Adelphine Pitter

As Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Turks and Caicos Tourist Board, it is a privilege to greet you on the occasion of our 2nd annual Tourism Symposium. While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to change the format of this year's symposium, this is indeed a very special occasion and an event that we anticipate yearly.

As we are all aware, the global pandemic has impacted many industries, and the travel and tourism industry is no exception. Many tourism related businesses have faced unprecedented difficulties which have resulted in job losses, scaling back of operations and for some of our friends, closure altogether. However, this industry has proven to be resilient. Tourism is one of the world's largest industries and in many countries, including the Turks & Caicos Islands, it is the single largest source of investment and employment contributing significantly to our economy and accounting for thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

Unfortunately, this pandemic came as we braced for another record breaking year for arrivals and upset our plans to welcome over one million visitors to our shores, as we had in 2019.

Our response called for a new approach and marketing strategy. Cognizant of the fact that Turks and Caicos Islands competes with destinations all over the world for travel dollars, including our Caribbean neighbors (who also promote their sun, sand and sea); it was therefore critical that we highlight our competitive advantages once borders throughout the region and the world reopened.

With this in mind, I am inviting residents to 'Rediscover Turks and Caicos' and make a plan to experience and explore our magnificent Sister Islands. As residents, you too can enjoy the authentic and high quality experiences and superior service that beckon visitors to come back to our islands.

Now, more than ever before, it is time to fully indulge in the 'Beautiful by Nature' islands we are blessed to call home!



## MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR OF TOURISM



Pamela Ewing

Welcome to Tourism Environmental Awareness Month 2020 under the theme 'Rediscover Turks & Caicos'.

We have set aside the month of November as a time to appreciate our environment and celebrate our culture through activities that showcase the best that Turks & Caicos has to offer. When we look at all that is available here, particularly in local talent including arts and crafts, our chefs and other creative types, we want to ensure that the talented people are fully promoted. The talent, friendliness and hospitality of our people is paramount to our success.

As we invite you to virtually experience and explore our museum and cultural sites around the islands, this will provide the opportunity to rediscover some of what this beautiful land has to offer. While our museums will show our history, our video and art competitions will show what is to come given the multitude of local talent that will be on display. We are sure that you are always mindful of our environment due to the stunning beauty that surrounds us. It is difficult not to appreciate all that is Turks & Caicos.

As we celebrate throughout this month, we hope that the activities that we have organized will help you to have a further appreciation for this land and our talented people.

We feel sure that you will find our activities both exciting, informative and enriching. Tourism is the economic engine for these islands and aside from our people, the natural environment is what makes us special. Let us all do what we can to ensure that we protect what has been given to us so that we, tourists and our future generations will continue to be blessed and surrounded by these beautiful views.

Come with us on our virtual explorations and enjoy Tourism Environmental Awareness Month.

Thank you.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE TURKS AND CAICOS HOTEL & TOURISM ASSOCIATION



Stacy Cox & Todd Foss

November is annually recognized as Tourism Environmental Awareness Month (TEAM) in the Turks and Caicos Islands, illuminating the importance of sustainable tourism to our country and economy. It is our delight each year to join this collaborative initiative with our fellow tourism stakeholders and partners, led by the Turks and Caicos Tourist Board, and embark on a month-long adventure of activities and forums aimed at educating residents and visitors on the preservation and protection of our precious environment.

Turks and Caicos is acclaimed for its pristine beaches, luxury resorts and villas, vibrant coral reefs, stellar culinary experiences and exceptional service. This year's theme, "Rediscover Turks & Caicos", is an invitation to venture far beyond the Turks and Caicos you already know and love. We invite you to strengthen your connection to this Caribbean paradise we call home and explore an exciting new world in our Sister Islands.

Learn the awe-inspiring stories of our country's history through our museums and historical sites. Explore the intangible cultural heritage of these islands that is the bedrock of the beauty and hospitality of our people. Delve into the rich diversity of each island and envelop yourself in the warmth and spirit of its settlements and indigenous residents.

During this month, our signature TCHTA "Hello Tourist" program for students will be transformed into a digital experience of storytelling, ripsaw music and fun interactive sessions.

The apex of the month's lineup will be this year's TEAM Symposium where the accomplished Mr. Neil Walters, Acting Secretary General of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), will deliver the keynote address "Community Based Tourism Development: Safeguarding our Culture".

Join us in this exciting month-long celebration of our history, our culture, and our heritage. As we strive for the achievement of sustainable growth in our tourism product, the TCHTA remains a proud partner to the Tourist Board in the continued development and diversification of brand Turks and Caicos.

We encourage all residents and tourists alike to reignite your passion and appreciation for this beautiful slice of paradise. The islands are calling and welcoming you with open arms. Join us on this new adventure!



## JABRIEL WILLIAMS - JUNIOR MINISTER OF TOURISM FOR THE TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

The annual Turks and Caicos Youth Congress was held on November 21, 2019 at the Gustavus Lightbourne Sports Complex on the island of Providenciales. It is structured to mirror a Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) Board of Directors meeting.

The theme for the Youth Congress was 'Developing Smart and Sustainable Countries – Building Back Better'. Eight fourth formers from public and private high schools throughout the country were tasked with preparing a three-minute oral presentation on the theme. A 'mystery' question was presented to each participant and they were each allowed one minute to provide an answer.

Fifteen-year-old Williams represented her school, the Maranatha Academy, a Seventh Day Adventist Institution, and won the prestigious title of Junior Minister of Tourism 2019-2020. She called for more environmentally-friendly practices and initiatives that will contribute to the sustainability of the tourism industry.

Ms. Williams had the opportunity to be involved in the TCHTA's Star Awards ceremony in February 2020 where she welcomed the many guests to the function. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Williams' duties had to be curtailed. Ms. Williams was scheduled to represent the Turks and Caicos Islands at the Caribbean Tourism Organization's Youth Congress in October of this year however the event was postponed due to COVID-19.

She is currently pursuing her final year of study at the Maranatha Academy in Providenciales. The Turks and Caicos Tourist Board team wishes her all the best as she prepares to complete high school and moves on to higher education.



## STATEMENT BY NEIL WALTERS, SECRETARY GENERAL (AG) ON THE LAUNCH OF CARIBBEAN TOURISM MONTH 2020

## THEME: **THE CARIBBEAN AWAITS**



NEIL WALTERS

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO) joins our member countries, allied and affiliate members and Caribbean tourism interests in celebrating Caribbean Tourism Month in November, reaffirming our value of One Sea, One Voice, One Caribbean. This year's theme is, The Caribbean Awaits.

This theme compliments the region's success in generally containing the spread of COVID-19 which has taken a major toll on tourism along with other sectors of our economies. Caribbean countries have taken the required steps to protect our citizens and residents, conducted the required training to prepare our tourism and related frontline workers for the return of visitors and put the health protocols in place to reassure our potential visitors and residents that we take their health seriously. This has been the groundwork, and now we seek to rebuild the sector.

We observe this year's Caribbean Tourism Month with COVID-19 still affecting travel as the Caribbean and the rest of the world continue to await a vaccine. The impact on tourism has been immense – a 57 per cent decline in arrivals during the first six months of 2020, an estimated 50 per cent to 60 per cent fall in visitor spend, and tens of thousands of jobs lost. Those still employed have, in several cases, accepted reductions in working hours and wage cuts.

The resilience of the Caribbean is shown by

the progress we have made towards the resumption of tourism activity. Currently, about 25 Caribbean countries have reopened their borders to commercial travel, either fully or partially, and others are putting the necessary measures in place to welcome visitors. This year's theme further compliments the reopening of our borders, as the clarion call 'We welcome you' speaks to the fact that the Caribbean is the perfect place for those who have begun to travel or are thinking of travelling soon, to find solace in a place that is an oasis of health at this time.

The CTO, in conjunction with our members, has planned a number of social media activities in observance of the month. We encourage all of you to participate and to share our hashtag, #TheCaribbeanAwaits.

We cannot rest on our laurels, and we remain cognizant of the toll that COVID-19 has taken, and continues to take on our economies, and importantly, our people. In all of our destinations, we must remain vigilant and constantly adjust to what is probably one of the most dynamic situations any of us will ever face. We hope and pray for recovery; it will be slow, but every step forward is a welcome one.

In the meantime, be assured that whatever your travel plans, the Caribbean awaits.



# SYMPOSIUM Agenda

**Moderator** – Elisha Jennings, *Sr. Public Relations Officer*

**National Anthem & National Song** – Clement Howell High School

**Welcome** – Mary Lightbourne, *Deputy Director of Tourism*

**Remarks** – Pamela Ewing, *Director of Tourism*

**Introduction of Speaker** – Jennifer Pardo, *Sr. Marketing Executive*

**Presentation** – Neil Walters, *Acting Secretary General of CTO*

**Topic:** Challenges and Opportunities: Lessons from COVID-19 Pandemic

## **Panel Discussion**

**Topic:** Community Based Tourism Development: Safeguarding Our Culture

**Host:** Damian Wilson, *Policy Lead (Environment & Education)/Media & Civil Society*

*Liaison Manager of The Governor's Office*

## **Panelists:**

- John Hilton, *Deputy Chairman of Turks & Caicos Tourist Board*
- Desiree Robinson, *Turks & Caicos Islands Community College*
- Sabrina Forbes, *Turks & Caicos Chamber of Commerce*
- Drexwell Seymour, *HLB TCI*
- Algie Missick, *Caribbean Cruising*
- Angela Musgrove, *Senior Vice President - Investor Services, Invest TC*

## **Q&A Session**

**Vote of Thanks** – Diedra Been, *Financial Controller*



# Rediscover

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