

BIOSPHERE COMMITMENT PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

DEC 2020

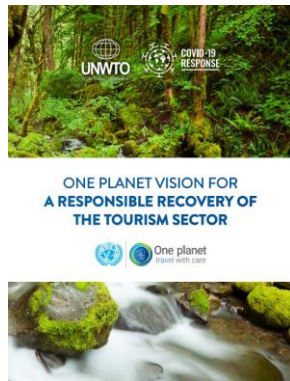


CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

RESPONSIBLE RECOVERY OF TOURISM SECTOR

2020 has been a year of great uncertainty, but also a year of opportunities. For some, 2020 may be remembered as a year where sustainability became the norm as opposed to an outlier. Under the pressure to transform, companies are acknowledging the importance of systemic changes in order to adapt to our world's challenges. Sustainability and regenerative tourism are more important than ever to help address the challenges by grasping opportunities for positive change.

We are providing this annual report to all Biosphere Members as an update of our yearly progress.



“Sustainability as the new normal”

“The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused unprecedented socio-economic impacts and, at the same time, raised our awareness of the role sustainability needs to play in our everyday life and economic activities.”

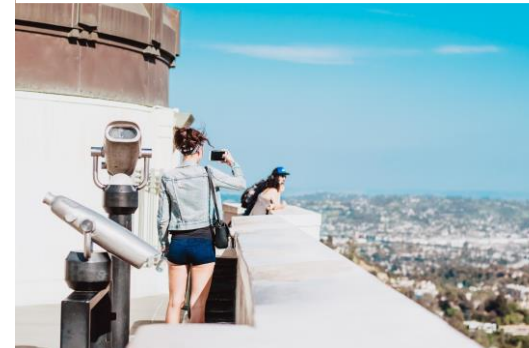


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SUSTAINABILITY GUIDELINES

TOTA's goal is to empower our stakeholders with the resources and tools to be successful and navigate all aspects of sustainability, accessibility, green and responsible tourism, inclusivity and Indigenous tourism.

We use the [United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) as guidelines to build sustainable communities. Each year the Biosphere Interdepartmental committee will re-evaluate and determine sustainable development goal areas that as an industry we would like to meet.

As part of the philosophy that decisions an individual makes today have an impact for seven generations to come, "[Seven Affirmations for Seven Generations](#)" was created and pledged to articulate guidelines for realizing sustainable tourism in the Thompson Okanagan region.





Phase One Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Focus



AREA OF FOCUS	YEAR 1				YEAR 2			YEAR 3			
Eco Efficiency	●		●	●	●	●		●		●	●
Climate Change & Energy	●		●		●					●	●
Health & Safety	●	●			●		●	●	●	●	
GSTC Training	●		●	●			●	●		●	●
Tourism Resiliency	●				●	●	●			●	
Members Engagement								●		●	
Total SDG Contribution	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Low Density ● Medium Density ● High Density

AFTER
YEAR 3

ACCESSIBILITY
TRAINING &
ASSESSMENT



SUSTAINABLE
FOOD



MORE TO
COME...



7 Affirmations For 7 Generations

Our goal as a region is to strengthen the support to our stakeholders now and in the future as we work towards **tourism recovery** and **long-term resiliency**. We will continue to adopt the foundations of our Thompson Okanagan Regional Pledge in the actions we take moving forward.

The Thompson Okanagan Regional Pledge; "Seven Affirmations for Seven Generations" was created to articulate guidelines for realizing **sustainable tourism** in the Thompson Okanagan region and is based on the **Indigenous Seven Generations Principle**.

Based on the Indigenous Seven Generations Principles the philosophy recognizes that decisions an individual makes today have an impact for seven generations to come. Therefore, it is always our responsibility to consider the far-reaching and long-term implications of our actions.

As a region we will take the time to work with our stakeholders and industry partners to progressively rebuild our regional tourism industry to help it become resilient and ready to withstand future impacts.



- 1 | TRUE ROOTS
- 2 | TREAD LIGHTLY
- 3 | BE A GOOD NEIGHBOUR
- 4 | TRAVEL SAFELY
- 5 | LIVE IN HARMONY
- 6 | CHOOSE LOCAL
- 7 | EDUCATE OTHERS

Haven't signed up for the pledge?
Click button below

[PLEDGE](#)



PARTNERSHIPS & VALUE-ADDED SERVICES

TOTA has placed a strong emphasis on the need for strategic partnerships, recognizing that an **integrated approach** enhances the overall level of progress and mutual benefit. This philosophy remains core to providing continuous values to all Biosphere Committed Companies.

2020 is a unique year for Biosphere Commitment program due to COVID-19 and the focus of TOTA's efforts is to establish partnerships, create value-added programs to enhance our ability to provide resources and tools to Biosphere Companies' sustainable initiatives.

Newly established partnerships in 2020 include:

- FortisBC
- SunX Malta Climate Friendly Travel





Growing Engagement In Biosphere And Value-added Programs

Tourism sector has been one of the hardest hit due to the dramatic reduction in visitation and tourism revenue.

This is a significant opportunity for us to step back and reassess. We gained a deeper appreciation for the business case for sustainability and support tourism businesses with their recovery process, such as

- Save money and improve bottom line
- Build a resilient and responsible framework
- Gain global recognition in biosphere commitment

Not yet part of the Biosphere Program? Complete the expression of interest form now!

**Expression
of Interest**



BIOSPHERE
committed entity

104 Biosphere Committed Companies in process

2020: 34 more companies in process
2021 Target: 200 Committed Entities



48 companies engaged in Eco Efficiency Program

2021 Target: 100 companies engaged in Eco Efficiency Program



35 companies participating in Health & Safety Assessments



I. Safety and Hygiene Protocols | World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC)



The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association was recognized by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) as a Safe Travel Destination on June 25th, 2020.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, the WTTC, the global body representing the travel and tourism sector, produced safety and hygiene protocols and guidelines for re-opening tourism that have been embraced by over 1,200 major tourism companies, in over 80 destinations around the world.



67

organizations participating in Safe Travels in Thompson Okanagan Region

Haven't signed up for Safe Travels Initiatives? Click the button below and request access to the Safe Travels Stamp.



In August 2020, we included Safe Travels initiatives as part of the Biosphere Commitment Program Year 1 questionnaire.





II. Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) | go2HR



Not sure where to start? Click button below to watch an introduction to the go2HR OHS program.

OHS Program for Biosphere

go2HR provides Biosphere Committed businesses with added value through the go2HR Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Framework for Biosphere. COVID-19 Workplace Assessment Tool was added to the original OHS Framework this year to help businesses managing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. We also see more Biosphere committed company businesses utilize industry health and safety related resources, employee training programs, self-assessments and 1:1 consultations provided by go2HR.

- 17 attendees to in-person OHS overview workshop pre-COVID
- 7 one-on-one consultations with businesses
- 12 views for go2HR H&S Overview webinar
- 4 OHS program Open houses (Continue into next year)





III. Eco Efficiency Assessment | GreenStep Solutions



TOTA is working in partnership with GreenStep Solutions and FortisBC to support regional tourism businesses by identifying operational inefficiencies, providing tools to address them, and ultimately reducing utility bills.

Biosphere Committed Companies can receive a full Eco Efficiency Assessment (energy, water, waste, carbon footprint) at no cost including access to the Carbon Software.

Ready to identify operational inefficiencies and reduce costs? Click button below to start your assessment today.



48 companies engaged in Eco Efficiency Program



“Most of us don't realize that by simply reviewing our bills every month and just by being aware of our daily energy use practices, we can cut down a lot on our utility costs. As TOTA's Energy Analyst, my job is to work with your business and identify those hidden low hanging fruits which could save you some dollars! All you have to do is let us know that you are interested!”
Thivya Viswanathan | Energy Analyst



MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

As we have been forced to practice social distancing over the past 8 months, we realized how important it is to maintain engagement during this difficult time.

While face-to-face communication became challenging, we have used phone calls and virtual meetings to build more meaningful and deeper conversations with Biosphere members.

We are also planning many social activities in a virtual setting to implement in the new year. Examples of our upcoming engagement activities

- Biosphere Social
- Biosphere Program Experts Open House – Drop in sessions





What do Biosphere Members Say



“... give us direction to our sustainability efforts”

As a Biosphere Committed Business, we have been able to gain access to an outstanding network of qualified and supportive businesses who have been instrumental in training and giving direction to our team.

By working with this team, we were able to choose Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have given us direction to our sustainability efforts. The SDGs have given us focus that is understandable, measurable and effective. We have seen tremendously positive results in energy reduction, water conservation and preserving the health of our land.

The Biosphere Commitment Program has given us the training and tools to effectively continue to be committed to the well-being of our company, customers, community and environment.

Ashley Demedeiros | Marketing Manager



“Easy to follow with lots of great support”

As a small tourism business in the Okanagan and a Biosphere Committed Business we highly recommend TOTA’s Biosphere program to any stakeholder. The program is easy to follow with lots of great support from all parties involved.

The Eco-efficiency program together with Green Steps and Fortis BC helped us to understand where we can work on our energy footprint and reduce waste. The program touches 2-3 sustainable goals per year and asks all the right questions to work on. Being part of this a no-brainer!

Kathrin & Rolf von Andrian | Owner and operator of Myra Canyon Ranch/Bikes/Stables



Pivot Our Communication Strategy

2020 Outreach



461 Outreach Emails to date



355 Outreach Calls to date



90 Virtual Meetings to date



10 e-blasts



“ Being able to connect with the Biosphere members and help evolve the program has been a really fun project for me. I look forward to connecting more with the Biosphere Members in 2021 and reveal what we have been working on these past months. ”

Amy Kneller | Regional Brand Ambassador



“ Despite 2020 being one of the most challenging years for tourism businesses, the Biosphere program continues to be an asset for committed members to cut costs and pursue UNWTO Sustainable development goals while contributing more effectively to making the Thompson Okanagan a sustainable destination for visitors. ”

Kavan Vijayakumar | Event & Industry Relations Specialist



“ Thank you so much for the conversation and I look forward to digging into these resources! ”

Ginger Brunner | Regional HR Specialist



Biosphere Activities To Date

ENGAGEMENT

12 Biosphere Newsletters

30 Biosphere companies featured



[Subscribe TOTA Newsletter](#)

TRAINING & EDUCATION

4 OHS Open Houses

2 GSTC Training sessions



EXCLUSIVE OPPORTUNITY

14 participated in ZEVIP Grant

18 Biosphere Video Shot for businesses



RECOGNITION

32

Biosphere diplomas sent





LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

This year, tourism businesses faced various challenges due to COVID-19. We refocused our efforts to recovery and resiliency.

Nevertheless, important advancements were made in establishing program partnerships to continue providing values to Biosphere Committed Companies, providing cost saving opportunities, strengthening communications with members.

With the growth of the Biosphere program, **streamlining the commitment process** and **continue providing values** to the committed companies become apparent and critical.

Further work is required to continue developing strategic partnerships to provide businesses with tools and resources in achieving sustainability.





Continue your Biosphere Journey

“ Sustainability is not a destination; it is a journey. The Biosphere Commitment program provides a framework to help us along this journey together. ”

1 Year 1-3
(Current)



After initial evaluation, **Biosphere Commitment Status** is granted.

TOTA is providing tools and resources to help the business **improve sustainability activities**.

2 Year 4-6



Previously committed companies can **renew their status** at the end of year 3.

TOTA will provide additional assessments to help businesses make improvements and prepare to become **fully certified**.

3 Year 7 Onward



TOTA will support your ultimate goal of moving from commitment to certification with a variety of **certification** option.



Transmitting the Values of Sustainability



Biosphere Commitment Ambassadors act as the leaders in the development of sustainable tourism. They promote Biosphere initiatives to other regional businesses.



Ambassadors can communicate, recommend and promote certain experiences as Biosphere Ambassadors through TOTA's communication channels.



When an additional 3 companies are brought into the program through referral, you will receive one year of your Biosphere commitment for free and an additional complimentary year of the program for each additional company brought on.

Your Organization



3 Biosphere Members



BIOSPHERE
committed entity



Your Organization
One year free





Climate Friendly Travel



About SUNx

The Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) has partnered with the Strong Universal Network (SUNx), to develop resilient, Climate Friendly Travel, in alignment with the Paris 1.5 Trajectory and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SUNx System for Climate Friendly Travel recognizes the importance of placing climate resilience at the core of corporate and community planning decisions, with the Travel and Tourism sector as a major contributor and potential leader when it comes to human development and climate action.

The Global Climate Friendly Travel 2050 Ambitions Registry will also be built into the Biosphere Commitment Program in 2021.



Connect with Biosphere Members

2020

- 39 members in Biosphere Facebook group
- 4 Biosphere Hall of Fame awards (Announcement in the new year)

2021

- Biosphere Virtual Social Networking
- TOTA Biosphere Academy (Resource Hub for your Biosphere Journey)
- Biosphere Open Houses (Q& A with TOTA's program experts)
- Social Media Engagement (Facebook Group & other platforms)

2020 Hall of Fame Award Categories

