



PREPARING MEETING PROFESSIONALS FOR THE FUTURE

The Go WEST Summit: Getting Better Every Year

Supporting strong professional development programs has always been a top priority for MPI Foundation Canada (MPIFC). So it wasn't much of a stretch for the Foundation to fund strategic education content at Go WEST, the annual educational summit for meeting professionals in western Canada.

The first two Go WEST conferences were hosted by MPI's Greater! Calgary Chapter in 2003 and 2004. In 2005, MPIFC's first official year of operation, the Manitoba Chapter hosted the conference in Winnipeg and received MPIFC funding for content development. In 2006, the host was the Greater Edmonton Chapter, and MPIFC was at the table again.

Go WEST 2006 featured a wonderfully diverse lineup that was based in large part on session evaluations from the previous year, said conference chair Cheryl Renzenbrink. Friday opened with a buffet of offerings, such as a panel of chefs serving up fresh food ideas. The first day closed with a Friday night "Safari in the City" at the Westin Hotel.

On Saturday morning, protocol consultants Ann Marsh and Sue Jacques advised participants on how to make a professional impression in seven seconds, while Kenneth Kristofferson of eXperiential Events delivered a session on Mega Events.

For Renzenbrink, the best came last with Sunday speakers Michele Wierzgac, MS, CMM on the importance of self-branding, and Ed Scannell, CMP, CSP on meetings industry trends.

"Michele is so down to earth, and she really encourages audience participation," Renzenbrink says. "Ed's seminar made us think, and he really mixed us up, both planner and suppliers, each of us seeing issues from both points of view, not just our own side."

"The social events were also outstanding," she says. "We surprised some, dismayed some. But for the most part, I think we impressed people, and created a synergy that gave everyone a chance to explore new ideas."

The 2007 Go WEST conference takes place October 26-28 in Vancouver.