



Announcing the Winners of the Sitka Messengers of Biodiversity Reporting Grants

For Immediate Release

December 4, 2023

Vancouver, BC



The Sitka Foundation, in partnership with the Science Media Centre of Canada (SMCC), is pleased to announce the inaugural **Sitka Messengers of Biodiversity Reporting Grants** to ten outstanding journalists from Canada and the United States.

These grants are designed to support reporting and writing or broadcast stories about biodiversity issues in British Columbia that will be published or broadcast in a range of media in Canada, the U.S., or internationally.

Accurate, evidence-based journalism is a foundation of our democracy that serves the public and is critical to our ability to have well-informed public dialogues and make wise decisions about our future. Yet in Canada and around the world, media outlets have been forced to cut budgets and reduce resources for in-depth reporting.

Many journalists today are limited to working the phones and rarely leaving their desks. Those dedicated to covering the issues of our time struggle to find resources to visit critical locations and take in eye-witness assessments. Even national and international media outlets lack travel funds, which restricts their ability to do on-the-ground reporting and investigation.

The Sitka Biodiversity Reporting Grants are designed to be flexible and can be used to cover the journalists' travel and research time. Applicants participated in a simple application process with a quick turnaround time to receive funding and get reporting. SMCC is administering the program.

These ten accomplished journalists will report on the complex biodiversity issues that affect British Columbia's nature and people - where gains are being made - and tell stories about the people and partnerships working on solutions. The grant recipients are:

- **Odette Auger**, Independent Journalist, Storyteller and Author, Cortes Island, B.C.
@OdetteAuger
- **Andrew Engelson**, Freelance Journalist, Seattle, Washington
@andyengelson
- **Erica Gies**, Author and Independent Science and Environment Journalist, Victoria, B.C.
@egies
- **Isabelle Groc**, Independent Writer and Documentary Filmmaker, Vancouver, B.C.
@isabelleproc
- **Arno Kopecky**, Author and Environmental Journalist, Vancouver, B.C.
@arno_kopecky
- **Lesley Evans Ogden**, Freelance Science Journalist, Vancouver, B.C.
@ljevanso
- **Jane Palmer**, Science Journalist, Eldorado Springs, Colorado
@TJPalmerWrites
- **Daniel Pierce**, Independent filmmaker and journalist, Vancouver, B.C.
@ramshacklefilms
- **Jimmy Thomson**, Freelance Journalist, Victoria, B.C.
@jwsthomson
- **Laura Trethewey**, Author and Science Writer, Hamilton, Ont.
@ltrethew

Forty journalists applied for the \$10,000 and \$15,000 grants, making the selection in this first pilot year an exciting but challenging process. An expert panel of adjudicators selected the winners from the talented pool of applicants. The panel included: Jim Handman, Executive Director of the Science Media Centre of Canada and former Senior Producer of CBC Radio's *Quirks & Quarks*, Francine Compton, Associate Director of the Indigenous Journalists Association and former producer for APTN and CBC Indigenous, Nancy Baron, a science communications expert, author, and Sitka board member, and Carolyn Beaty, the Executive Director of the Sitka Foundation.

"British Columbia is a vast province where biodiversity still flourishes and yet faces multiple challenges due to loss of habitat and climate change," said Carolyn Beaty. "These grants will help reporters bring to readers and viewers all over the world stories of what is really happening in the lands, waters, and communities of this province. The recipients of these grants will share with us the highs, the lows, and the urgency of generating a sustainable future for BC and all its inhabitants."

ABOUT THE SITKA FOUNDATION

The Sitka Foundation is a charitable family foundation that funds the conservation of nature and the protection of biodiversity through granting programs.

ABOUT THE SCIENCE MEDIA CENTRE OF CANADA

The Science Media Centre of Canada (SMCC) is a charitable organization that supports science and health journalism in Canada. The SMCC aims to improve public understanding and engagement in science issues through media coverage that is accurate, incisive and evidence-based.

MEDIA INQUIRIES

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