

SOK Forum 2025 - Speaker Bios and Pictures

Saugeen Ojibway Nation Elders
(information coming soon)

Brian Popelier - Terrestrial Ecologist and Land Stewardship Coordinator for The Bruce Trail Conservancy. Conducts Ecological Land Classifications and biological inventories of BTC owned properties. Supervises and coordinates 214 volunteer Land Stewards on the management of over 3000 ha of BTC managed land from Niagara to Tobermory including restoration projects, encroachment, species at risk, and stewardship issues.



Michael Chazan – Professor of Archaeology, University of Toronto

Michael Chazan is an archaeologist specializing in the study of human evolution. He is a Professor at the University of Toronto and received his PhD from Yale University. For the past 20 years Michael has co-directed research at Wonderwerk Cave, the site in South Africa that has produced the earliest reliable evidence for the use of fire by human ancestors. Michael is the author of many scholarly articles as well as the book *The Reality of Artifacts: An Archaeological Perspective*, published by Routledge.



Natasha Jurko

Natasha is a Physical Fire Scientist working at the Canadian Forest Service, out of the Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. Her background is in Geographic Information Systems and geospatial analysis. She is part of the team developing the Next Generation Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System. Natasha also leads efforts to adapt the Canadian Forest Fire Danger Rating System (CFFDRS) for use in other regions and applicability across diverse landscapes.

**Sean Liipere - Resource Conservation Manager, Parks Canada**

Sean is the acting Resource Conservation Manager at Bruce Peninsula National Park and Fathom Five National Marine Park. Originally from the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula, Sean has an enduring appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the region and understands the importance of these protected areas to the wellbeing of local communities. Sean has been with Parks Canada for over 20 years in various roles from research and education to planning and policy, and he is currently responsible for the fire management program under the resource conservation department.

**Kennith Cox**

Zach DeCock

Zach is a Fire Operations Supervisor at the Haliburton Fire Management Headquarters with the Aviation Forest Fire and Emergency Services Branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources. Zach has been a Wildland Firefighter for 14 years, filling various response functions throughout his career in Ontario and on his many deployments across Canada. He is passionate about engaging with the public on topics of wildland fire mitigation and promoting the understanding of the ecological role of fire. Zach is also a Volunteer Fire Fighter in his local community of Ramara Township.

**Jack Burt - Fire Chief in Northern Bruce Peninsula.**

Chief Burt began his fire service career in 1999 in South Bruce Peninsula and has spent time in both Meaford and London in Chief Officer roles. Chief Burt has been awarded the King's Coronation Medal, the Fire Service Exemplary Service Medal, and the Provincial Long Service Medal during his career. Chief Burt is passionate about fire safety and advocates for fire and life safety initiatives locally, provincially, and throughout Canada.



Thomas Heinrich

Thomas, a student of ecology at the University of Sherbrooke, has worked as a technician for conservation organizations in Quebec and Coastal British Columbia and holds a particular interest in the restoration of deciduous old-growth forests. His first degree in Design, and early work in urban affairs taught him how to shape the land. He left Montreal to explore how to actually take care of it. The road led him to the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Quebec and the Salish Sea of British Columbia. There, he was introduced to a growing brand of conservation that blends ecological restoration with food sovereignty, ecological education, climate adaptation and the revival of Indigenous cultures. Now back in Quebec, he hopes to move conservancy organizations towards more active management of protected lands as a means to amend the major disturbances of the past and face the uncertainties of the future.



Milt McIver (Mayor, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula)

Rod Anderson (Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Northern Bruce Peninsula)

Ethan Meleg (Banquet MC)

Rob Klea (Forum MC)

Rob fell in love with the Saugeen Peninsula in the early 1980's when working with the Ministry of Natural Resources supporting the Junior Ranger Program out of Emmett Lake. His work supporting youth evolved into a career in the field of education as a classroom teacher, counsellor, itinerant behaviour resource teacher, behaviour program teacher, and consultant responsible for behavioural services. He has also taught professional education courses at the college and university level. Rob has spent a majority of his career working with at-risk populations or supporting professionals working with students with social, emotional, and behavioural challenges. Rob created and led an adventure-based program that supported students with behavioural exceptionalities through a variety of therapeutically designed outdoor experiences. In the latter half of his career, Rob was responsible for the coordination of Behavioural Services for a large school board and provided leadership support to itinerant and program-based professionals. He also provided training to various groups in the areas of non-violent crisis intervention, behaviour management, classroom systems design, special education, leadership, and nature connection. Rob became certified as a forest therapy guide prior to retirement and has worked with a variety of organizations promoting the importance of nature connection for mental health and well being.



Chris Sumpton (panel moderator, Director, SOK Board of Directors)

Chris was born in Vancouver, B.C., and has a BA from Simon Fraser University. He has lived in Ontario since 1976. He resides part-time in Tobermory and has ancestral roots in Bruce County. He served on two non-profit boards previous to joining Sources Of Knowledge.

Professionally, Chris worked in the TV and Film business, most lately as the co-founder and Producer/Director at an independent documentary production company. He has produced twenty-four documentary films, including several award-winners, that have been broadcast in Canada, U.S.A., France, Germany, South Africa, Australia, and around the world. As a writer and director he made several films on science and wildlife, including *The Autism Enigma*; *Nature Bites Back: The Case Of The Sea Otter*; and *Wolverine: Devil Of The North*.

As a filmmaker he believed in widening public knowledge on subjects that matter and looks forward to being a part of the work Sources Of Knowledge does to promote understanding in the natural environment, conservation, climate change and community-building.

