

# WL NEWS

**ISSUE 64**

**THE POWER OF LEISURE TO UNITE  
PEOPLE, PERSPECTIVES, AND  
COMMUNITIES**



**June 2025**

# Editorial

Are you a  
WLO Premium  
member?  
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news here!

Dear members and colleagues,

The 18th World Leisure Congress in Breda, Netherlands is just around the corner. Be sure to register by July 30th to avoid missing out; you'll find more information and a registration link below in this newsletter's first section.

In further WLO news, you'll read about our participation in the 5th Civil Society Forum, as well as learn about an upcoming webinar spotlighting student research on recreation and sport facility design in collaboration with WLO's Special Interest Group on Leisure Management. We're also thrilled to announce that after a productive and successful term as Editor-in-Chief of the *World Leisure Journal*, Prof. Dr. Sandro Carnicelli has renewed his contract.

The big news from the wider world leisure network is that the UN Tourism Executive Council has for the first time nominated a woman as its new Secretary-General; read on to find out who she is and access the full UN press release. You'll also find details of the Québec Council of Leisure's participation in the 2025 Social Economy Summit and read about the BCRPA Symposium, which included a fascinating session by WLO's Chair, Prof. Joanne A. Schroeder.

Our Research, Policy, and Industry sections are packed with fascinating articles this month. You'll read about the potential for art and culture to help end discrimination, discover new findings on the relationship between nature and wellbeing, learn about the surprising popularity of museums in our increasingly digital, screen-saturated age, and more.

The Opportunities we're excited to highlight include an invitation to submit original research and reviews for publication in the WL Journal, and our search for a host for the 2030 World Leisure Congress. These are both fantastic ways to be part of the global conversation about the importance of recreation and wellbeing.

We close the issue with a fascinating Encounter with three members of the WL Special Interest Group on Critical Event Studies as they discuss the power of events to serve as powerful tools for promoting equity, inclusivity, and community engagement.

Yours truly,

Dr. Cristina Ortega Nuere  
WLO Chief Operating Officer





# WLO News



Whether you're a researcher, practitioner, or policymaker, the WL Congress offers a unique platform to expand your knowledge, exchange ideas, and grow your global network.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a truly inspiring and cross-disciplinary gathering. Registration is open—secure your place today and join us in vibrant Breda!

**Registration deadline: July 30, 2025** – [sign up here!](#)



[worldleisurenl.com](http://worldleisurenl.com)

## Registration deadline approaching for WL Congress 2025!

Excitement is building for the [18th World Leisure Congress](#) in Breda, Netherlands from August 25-28, 2025, and we're putting the finishing touches on the final program, including **renowned keynote speakers, dynamic debates, and a dedicated scientific agenda.**

This international event will bring together participants from over 25 countries to explore an array of topics shaping the future of leisure, from sustainability and innovation to community well-being and digital transformation.



## Upcoming webinar: Cross-cultural analysis of Australian and American recreation and sport facilities

The [World Leisure Organization's Special Interest Group on Leisure Management](#) (LM SIG) is excited to announce an upcoming webinar spotlighting student voices from the [Texas State University World Leisure Centre of Excellence](#) (WLCE). This marks the first collaboration between LM SIG and a WLCE student cohort, offering a unique international exchange of perspectives on recreation and sport facility design.

The three participating students—who are currently in Melbourne, Australia as part of a study abroad course on Cross-Cultural Studies in Recreation and Sport Facility Design—will explore the differences between recreation and sport facilities in Australia and the United States.

Each of the participants has chosen a different type of recreation facility as the focus of their research:

- **Aquatic facilities:** Destiny Hisaw, Senior, Recreation and Sport Management
- **Strength and cardiovascular training facilities:** Ethan Jordan, Sophomore, Recreation and Sport Management
- **Martial arts training centers:** Sophia Kniseley, Sophomore, Exercise Sport Science – Health & Fitness Management

### Key topics of discussion during the webinar will include:

- Target audiences and marketing strategies
- Facility amenities and access structures
- Accessibility through ADA and universal design
- The influence of aesthetics, landscaping, and transportation
- Branding and public perception of facilities

This event reflects WLO's commitment to fostering emerging scholarship, international collaboration, and inclusive dialogue within the global leisure community.

Join us for this engaging session and support the next generation of leisure professionals!

[Register here!](#)



## **Prof. Dr. Sandro Carnicelli renews contract as Editor-in-Chief of the *World Leisure Journal***

We are pleased to announce that [Prof. Dr. Sandro Carnicelli](#) will remain in his position as Editor-in-Chief of the [World Leisure Journal](#) for a further three years. Under his leadership, the journal has made remarkable progress in fostering inclusivity and diversity:

- The Editorial Board has achieved gender balance
- The journal expanded its reach by publishing articles in multiple languages alongside English translations
- New sections such as Global South Leisure Perspectives, Leisure Methods, and Industry Case Studies have enriched the journal's content
- Special issues and collaborations with other leisure journals have strengthened our network

The World Leisure Organization thanks Sandro for his dedication and vision, and acknowledges the valuable support of Chief Administrator Nerea Rojas Mendieta alongside Associate Editors Edwin Gómez, Adele Doran, David Scott, Guliz Coskun, Marco Valeri, and all members of the Editorial Board.

As Sandro embarks on his final term, we look forward to seeing the continued growth and positive transformation of the *World Leisure Journal* as we continue to strive for a more inclusive and equitable publishing system worldwide.



## **WLO participates in the 5th Civil Society Forum ahead of the 10th Session of the Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention**

On June 17, 2025, the World Leisure Organization (WLO) took part in the 5th [Civil Society Forum](#), a hybrid gathering held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and online via Zoom.

Taking place just prior to the [10th Session of the Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#), the Forum served as a vital platform for dialogue, collaboration, and policy reflection.

Thanks to its hybrid accessibility, WLO was able to closely follow and actively participate in the forum's full array of insightful presentations, critical discussions, and inspiring exchanges among cultural and civil society stakeholders from around the world.

The event offered a unique opportunity to align with global efforts to protect and promote cultural diversity—an area closely entwined with WLO's mission to foster leisure to enhance quality of life.



# Network



## Shaikha Al Nowais to become first female Secretary-General of UN Tourism

In a historic step for global tourism leadership, the UN Tourism Executive Council has nominated Emirati business leader Shaikha Al Nowais as its next Secretary-General, marking the first time a woman will hold the position.

The nomination was made during the 123rd session of the Council, which also reflected on eight years of progress in key areas such as innovation, investment, and education.

Ms Al Nowais will begin her term in 2026 upon official confirmation by the UN Tourism General Assembly, ushering in a new era for inclusive and visionary leadership in tourism.

The World Leisure Organization (WLO) warmly acknowledges this milestone and its significance for the global leisure and tourism community.

**Read more here:** [UN Tourism press release](#)



## Québec Council of Leisure: Connecting through the Social Economy Summit

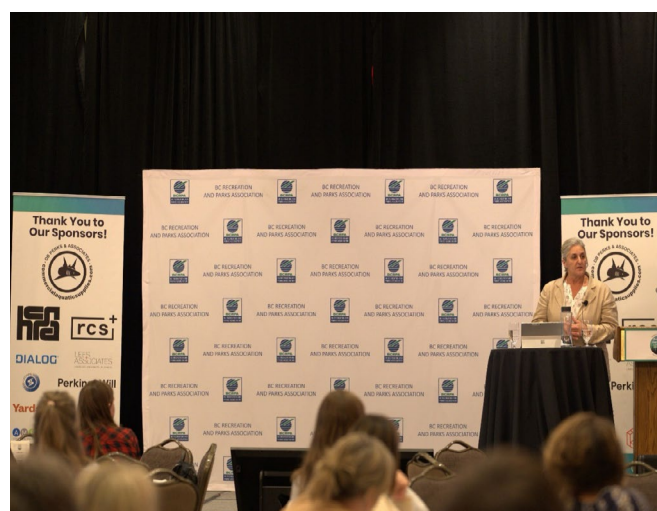
On May 14-15, 2025, the [Conseil Québécois du Loisir \(CQL\)](#) actively participated in the [Social Economy Summit 2025](#), a landmark event dedicated to advancing Quebec's social economy.

Organized by the [Chantier de l'économie sociale](#), the Summit is part of a broader initiative involving regional and sectoral explorations to shape the future of the social economy in Quebec. Focused on showcasing

collective innovations and building strategic alliances, the Summit brought together organizations committed to inclusive and community-centered economic development.

As an active [Chapter of the World Leisure Organization \(WLO\)](#) in the region, CQL plays a pivotal role in promoting leisure as a driver of individual and collective well-being. The organization advocates accessible, inclusive leisure that strengthens social cohesion, fosters citizen engagement, and contributes to sustainable development. During the Summit, CQL highlighted these values, underscoring how leisure contributes meaningfully to social solidarity and the economy.

Executive Director [Sonia Vaillancourt](#) took part in the Summit's closing session by endorsing the final declaration and reaffirming CQL's commitment to embedding leisure at the heart of Quebec's evolving economic and social vision.



## BCRPA Symposium: Inspiring belonging and connection through recreation

The [British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association \(BCRPA\)](#)—the leading organization supporting recreation and parks professionals in British Columbia—held its annual Symposium from May 6-9 at the Fairmont Château Whistler.

This flagship event, the only conference of its kind in the province, gathered over 400

professionals, planners, volunteers, and sector partners to engage with the theme 'Building our Future: Inspiring Belonging and Connection'. Attendees explored innovations and best practices to foster healthy, inclusive communities across British Columbia.

A highlight of the event was the session **'Recreation Prescription and Social Prescribing'**, presented by [Prof. Joanne A. Schroeder](#), Chair of the World Leisure Organization and Professor at Vancouver Island University, alongside Damon Johnston, Manager of Recreation Services for the City of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture.

Together, they explored how leisure activities—from parks and sports to arts and community events—can help combat social isolation, often called the 'disease of disconnection'. They shared emerging evidence supporting recreation as a powerful tool to improve well-being, create belonging, and reduce demands on healthcare.

Joanne was accompanied at the event by Dr. Aggie Weighill, coordinator of the [World Leisure Centre of Excellence of Vancouver Island University](#) and past BCRPA board member.

The BCRPA Symposium remains a vital forum for advancing recreation's role in building stronger, more connected communities—offering top-quality programming, networking, and practical solutions for the sector.



# Research



## Japan's Kobe University analysis explores relationship between socioeconomic status, nature, and wellbeing

from [Australasian Leisure Management](#)

A growing body of research highlights the vital role that access to nature plays in supporting well-being—particularly in urban areas facing socioeconomic challenges. Drawing on survey data from over 3,500 residents across two of Japan's major metropolitan regions, the analysis released by [Kobe University](#) offers timely insights into the intersection of urban planning, social equity, and leisure.

[READ MORE...](#)



## Study shows record high female participation in sport in Victoria

from [Australasian Leisure Management](#)

New research from [Federation University](#) has revealed record high female participation in sport across Victoria, marking a significant milestone in efforts to increase gender equality in sports. This report provides valuable insights for policymakers and sport organizations globally, highlighting the need for continued efforts to foster inclusivity and improve participation across all regions.

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# Policy



## 'Racism requires ignorance': How art and culture can help end racial discrimination

by Ana Carmo

In this powerful [UN News](#) interview, Sarah Lewis, Associate Professor of African and African American Studies at Harvard University, discusses the crucial role of art and culture in addressing racial discrimination. She emphasizes the importance of confronting historical injustices through education and institutional policy, arguing that ignorance allows for racism, but education is the key to dismantling it.

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## Culture unites, latest Eurobarometer shows

from the [European Commission](#)

The European Commission's latest [Eurobarometer](#) survey reveals that culture plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of community and integration among EU citizens. With nearly 87% of respondents advocating a strong cultural exchange within the EU, the survey highlights widespread support for artistic freedom, fair working conditions for artists, and the preservation of cultural heritage.

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## Learn about UNESCO Global Geoparks

from [UNESCO](#)

UNESCO Global Geoparks offer a holistic approach to protecting landscapes of geological significance while promoting education, sustainable development, and local community engagement. These parks emphasize geotourism as a key driver for local economies, creating new job opportunities and businesses, while preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

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# Industry



## Reimagining museums

from [UNESCO](#)

In an increasingly digital world where screens offer instant access to almost any information, it might seem like museums are becoming obsolete. The reality, however, is quite the opposite: museums have experienced a remarkable surge in popularity in recent decades. Since 1975, the number of museums worldwide has risen from 22,000 to nearly 100,000, and blockbuster exhibitions draw enormous crowds, breaking visitor records year after year.

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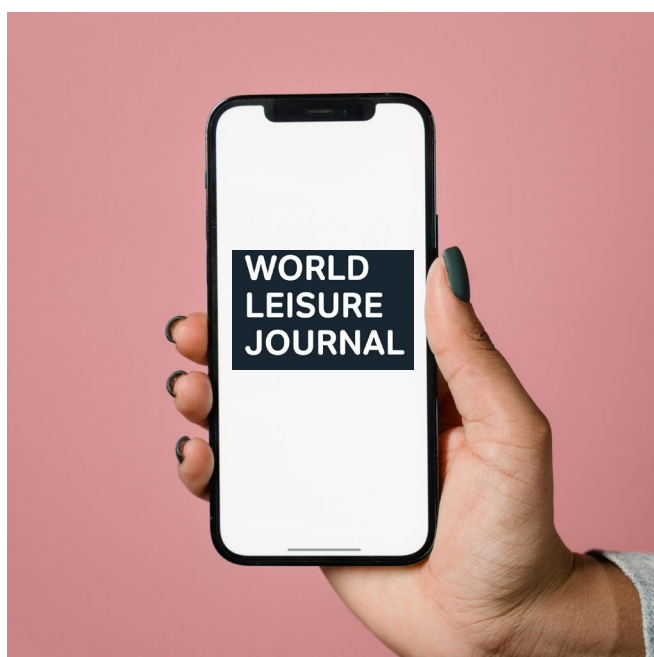
## New Taipei City Art Museum opens and commits to becoming all inclusive

from [Australasian Leisure Management](#)

The recent inauguration of the [New Taipei City Art Museum \(NTCAM\)](#) marks a significant milestone in Taiwan's cultural landscape, opening its doors with a bold commitment to inclusivity and community engagement. As the first public modern and contemporary art museum in New Taipei City, NTCAM aims to become a 'Museum for All'.

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# Publications



Reimagining community festivals and events: Critical and interdisciplinary perspectives (Vol 67 , No 2): This book review evaluates a recently published interdisciplinary textbook [published by Routledge](#) and edited by Allan Stewart Jepson, Raphaela Stadler, Trudie Walters which builds on Alan Clarke and Allen Jepson's 2015 work exploring global community festivals with themes like tradition, belonging, and innovation, offering fresh insights for researchers and professionals.

## **World Leisure Journal articles with free access this month**

Sport events and happiness: towards the development of a measuring instrument (Vol 58 , No 4): This study created a tool to measure happiness at sporting events and found that awareness of the 55+ Summer Games boosted community well-being.

A systematic review of motivation of sport event volunteers (Vol 60 , No 4): This article reviews 33 studies on sport event volunteers' motivations, identifies research gaps, and suggests a future agenda to improve volunteer management for successful events.



# Opportunities



## WL Journal – Share your research

Are you conducting research that advances our understanding of leisure and its role in improving quality of life?

The [World Leisure Journal](#) invites scholars, practitioners, and emerging researchers to submit original articles, reviews, and case studies for publication.

As the official journal of the World Leisure Organization, it provides an international platform for critical and innovative insights across all dimensions of leisure.

Join the global conversation and contribute to shaping the future of leisure studies.

[Learn more and submit your manuscript here!](#)



## Open call to host the World Leisure Congress 2030!

WLO invites expressions of interest from communities, cities, or institutions interested in hosting the **World Leisure Congress in 2030!** If your community is passionate about leisure and eager to be part of a global conversation, this is your opportunity to get involved and make a lasting impact.

To ensure a strong local foundation for the event's success, we encourage proposals developed in collaboration with professional associations, government agencies, and academic institutions.

Learn more about the World Leisure Congress Open Call [here](#).

# Encounter



## In this edition, we speak with members of the WL Special Interest Group on Critical Event Studies: Dra. Alba Colombo - Dr. Trudie Walters - Dr. Willem Coetzee

Drawing on their deep expertise, the conversation explores how events can serve as powerful tools for promoting equity, inclusivity, and community engagement—especially when thoughtfully designed with purposes that extend beyond entertainment.



**Dra. Alba Colombo**

Associate Professor, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Spain



**Dr Trudie Walters**

Senior Lecturer, Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki/Lincoln University in Aotearoa New Zealand



**Dr. Willem Coetzee**

Lecturer, Western Sydney University, Australia

### Designing inclusive festivals:

***In your research and global experience, how can leisure festivals be intentionally designed to promote access and inclusion—especially for marginalized, underrepresented, or historically excluded communities (e.g., Indigenous groups, migrants, people with disabilities)? What strategies or models from your work in sustainable tourism and event planning have proven most effective across diverse contexts?***

**Trudie** - I believe it all starts with involving the community. The most successful accessible and inclusive festivals are those that represent the voices of the community, so it is vital to include them in the planning and delivery. Listen to their goals and needs, and make sure they are genuinely incorporated right from the start.



**Alba** - agreeing with Trudie, co-creation with migrant and minority groups, intercultural programming, and shared decision-making structures have proven effective in fostering inclusion. In contexts like Mediterranean festivals, these strategies help reframe belonging and visibility through locally grounded, collaborative practices.

**Willem** - within the same marginalised communities the social structure and other intersectional qualities will also influence participation.

**Trudie** - that's so true Willem, communities are not homogenous so it's important to recognise this and reflect the diversity within planning!

## **Addressing equity and representation:**

***Given the current global emphasis on equity, representation, and accessibility, how should leisure and event professionals adapt their practices? How can we ensure these changes are sustainable and culturally sensitive—especially in regions with complex social histories, such as post-apartheid South Africa or post-colonial settings?***

**Alba** - In my view, the post-Franco transition in Spain showed how festivals and public events can play a powerful role in reclaiming space and reshaping collective identity. I believe event professionals must embed equity from the outset by working with local communities, especially in post-authoritarian or post-colonial contexts. As I understand that ensuring lasting and culturally sensitive change requires long-term dialogue, capacity-building, and deep attentiveness to local histories and power relations.

**Trudie** - The current political climate across many Western democracies at present seems to be moving to more right-wing ideologies, and festival funding may be impacted by anti-inclusive criteria. However, it is possible to 'build in' event organisation practices that embed equity and representation. First, if the event has been run previously, analyse the diversity of the attendees and identify who is missing. Second, carefully consider the information the target 'missing' audience needs to be able to make a decision to attend – what would make them feel welcome and included? For example, is the venue accessible and is there accessible parking, are you using pronouns and gender neutral language, is the web page screen reader-friendly, is there a quiet space or a dedicated time for neurodiverse people to attend? Third, make sure this information is communicated so they don't need to invest time and energy asking!

**Willem** - Great points Trudie and Alba. Policy settings and guidelines should be very clear on the type of events that a local government would like to host in their areas. I like the 3rd point you made Trudie, that information is communicated in the pre-event phase so that attendees are aware of the inclusive event practices. Things like a rainbow flag for the LGBTQIA+ community or a sunflower for attendees with hidden disabilities (not sure if this is only in Australia).

## Events as community builders:

***Can you share examples from your work where festivals or leisure events served as platforms for community engagement, intercultural dialogue, or reconciliation? What planning elements, stakeholder involvement, or evaluation methods helped achieve meaningful social outcomes?***

**Alba** - In my experience, events like the [Correfoc](#) and [Cors muts](#) in Barcelona, and [La Patum](#) in Berga, illustrate different dynamics of community engagement. The *correfoc* fosters participation across diverse urban groups, while the *cors muts* have become tools of resistance to global pressures like gentrification, reclaiming public space through collective expression. In contrast, *La Patum*, though symbolically powerful, reflects the tensions of a more closed local society, where inclusion is limited and change is contested. These examples show that meaningful social outcomes depend not only on planning and stakeholder involvement, but also on navigating local power structures and broader sociopolitical tensions.

**Willem** - Great points Alba. The social impact project of the 2023 World Leisure Congress and the idea of a solutions room during the congress created impact. Trudie, you can probably add many examples from FAFSwag, SouthD, Disability events and the marching ladies.

**Trudie** - Yes, your social impact project as part of the World Leisure Congress in New Zealand was a great example of community building Willem! Love those examples you raised too Alba. For me, the South D Street Festival in New Zealand and the Govanhill International Festival and Carnival in Scotland are model community building events, where the organisers worked and/or lived in the community. In both cases, they created an event within the community, for the community, that reflected the community. [My research](#) found that there were many benefits, from an individual level up to a community level. For SouthD, this included improved informal education and networking which has strengthened the ability of the community to raise their voices and be heard in local government planning. The GFC is an anti-racist festival which has also focused on resisting negative narratives.

## Responsibility beyond entertainment:

***What responsibilities do event organizers and leisure professionals hold in shaping festivals that contribute to social resilience and long-term impact? How can this be balanced with economic and tourism goals—particularly in communities where festivals are key economic drivers?***

**Alba** - in contexts like Barcelona, where festivals are both cultural expressions and economic engines, organizers must ensure that events do not deepen inequalities or displace local communities. For example, *cors muts* have resisted tourist-oriented homogenization by reclaiming public space and amplifying local voices. Balancing economic goals means reinvesting festival revenues into community projects, limiting commercial overexploitation, and supporting local artists and producers. Long-term resilience is built through stable community partnerships, anti-gentrification strategies, and cultural policies that protect the right to the city.

**Trudie** - it is fundamental to the sustainability of their business!

**Willem** - the SDG's - especially poverty alleviation, equality, decent work and responsible consumption come to mind.



# Stay connected with the World Leisure Organization!



*Follow our social media channels to keep up with the latest WLO news, global leisure opportunities, and updates from our vibrant international network. Join the conversation and be part of the community shaping the future of leisure worldwide!*



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WORLD LEISURE ORGANIZATION (WLO)

World Leisure Organization is a non-profit organization registered in the State of New York in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 1990.

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