Connect Money Impact

Event Summary

2026

Nanaimo, BC

scale INSTITUTE

Connect Money Impact 2026

Introduction

On June 23, 2026, Connect Money Impact brought together changemakers from across Vancouver Island and British Columbia **at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo, BC**, to explore how capital can be used to solve pressing social and environmental challenges. The event convened over 110 entrepreneurs, investors, and ecosystem builders, the three groups this gathering is built around, for a full day of learning and connection.

Connect Money Impact exists to help the social impact sector do what it often struggles to do on its own: find each other. Social enterprises looking for capital and investors looking for local opportunities rarely share the same spaces with the organizations that support them both. This event creates that space, with an ambitious goal behind it: to strengthen the social finance ecosystem in BC by fostering new relationships and amplifying the work of those reimagining what money can do in the service of impact.

The event was hosted by Scale Institute, a charity dedicated to research and innovation for the social change sector, with programming spanning social innovation, social enterprise, social procurement, and social finance. Convening Connect Money Impact is a natural extension of that work. We recognize and thank the Scale Institute Board of Directors: Kariann Aarup (Board Chair), Joanna Buczkowska-McCumber (Vice-Chair, Ideas for Impact), Michelle Cho-Black (Secretary, Social Root Consulting), Christy Pham (ACET), and Krystal Renschler (Mutatio Consulting). Their involvement went beyond governance, with Joanna and Krystal each moderating one of the day's panels.

Connect Money Impact 2026 took place on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The day opened with a welcome from event hosts and an Indigenous welcome, grounding the event in gratitude for the enduring connection Indigenous peoples have to this land.

One message came up again and again throughout the day: successful impact investing takes more than financial returns. It takes strong relationships and local ownership, along with cultural alignment and a genuine commitment to long-term community benefit.

CONVENED BY:

MOMENTUM PARTNERS:

ORGANIZING PARTNERS:

Our Partners' Role

This event does not happen without its partners. Connect Money Impact 2026 was convened by Scale Collaborative and Scale Institute, with Momentum Partners (Nanaimo Foundation, Thrive Impact Fund, Coastal Community, Impact Investing Hub/ACET, Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation, Island Coastal Economic Trust) and Organizing Partners (Community Futures Central Island, GrowthWorks, Vancouver Island Economic Alliance, Vancity, First Credit Union).

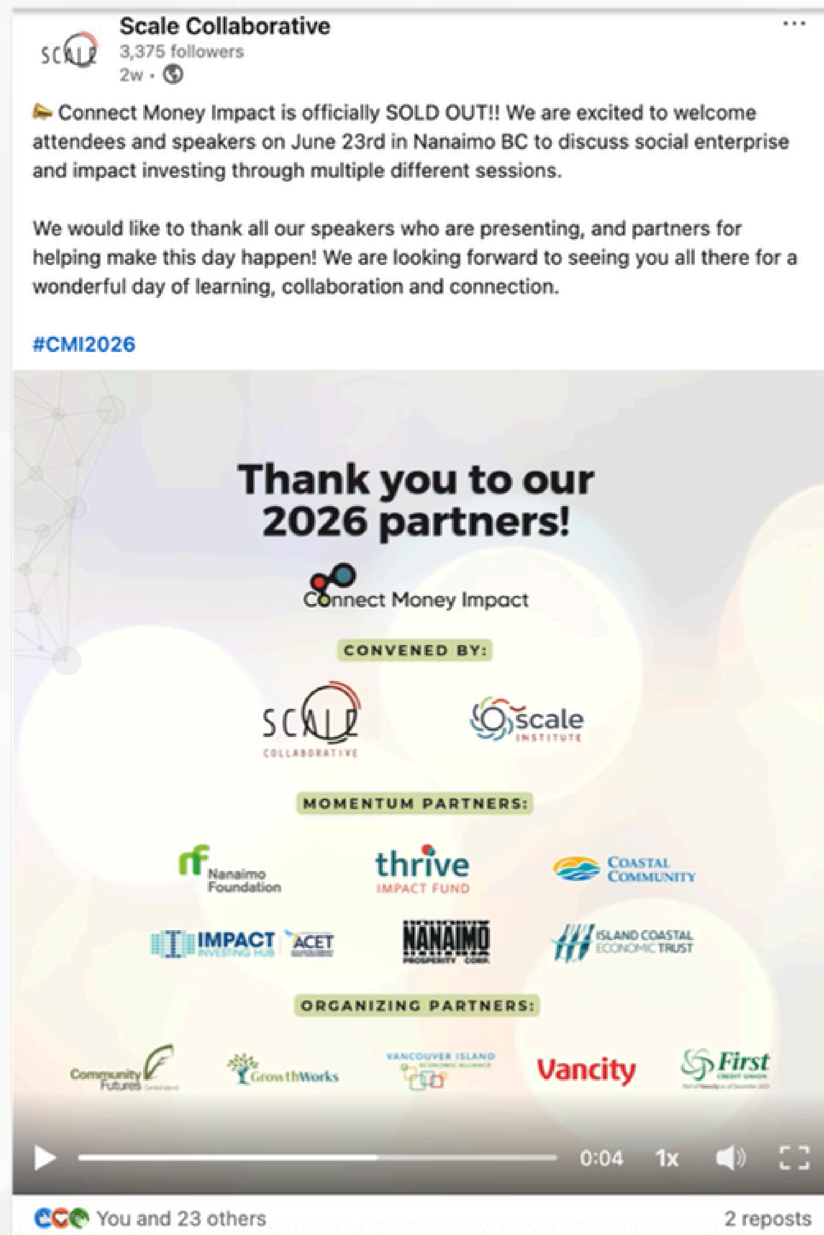
Partner support was visible throughout the experience. Partner names and brands appeared on the event website, in the digital program guide, and across the visual storytelling surrounding the day, and partners were recognized during the closing remarks.

More importantly, partners were key in developing the program, moderating sessions and helping guide the day and conversation. We want to recognize Jolynn Green of Community Futures Central Island/GrowthWorks, Tracey Brown of Nanaimo Foundation, Colin Stansfield of Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation, Kristin Hocking from CCCU, Julie Sperber from VIEA and Laurel Sabur of ACET.

Partner Displays

Website

Social Media Examples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3,375 followers
2w •

Connect Money Impact is officially SOLD OUT!! We are excited to welcome attendees and speakers on June 23rd in Nanaimo BC to discuss social enterprise and impact investing through multiple different sessions.

We would like to thank all our speakers who are presenting, and partners for helping make this day happen! We are looking forward to seeing you all there for a wonderful day of learning, collaboration and connection.

#CMI2026

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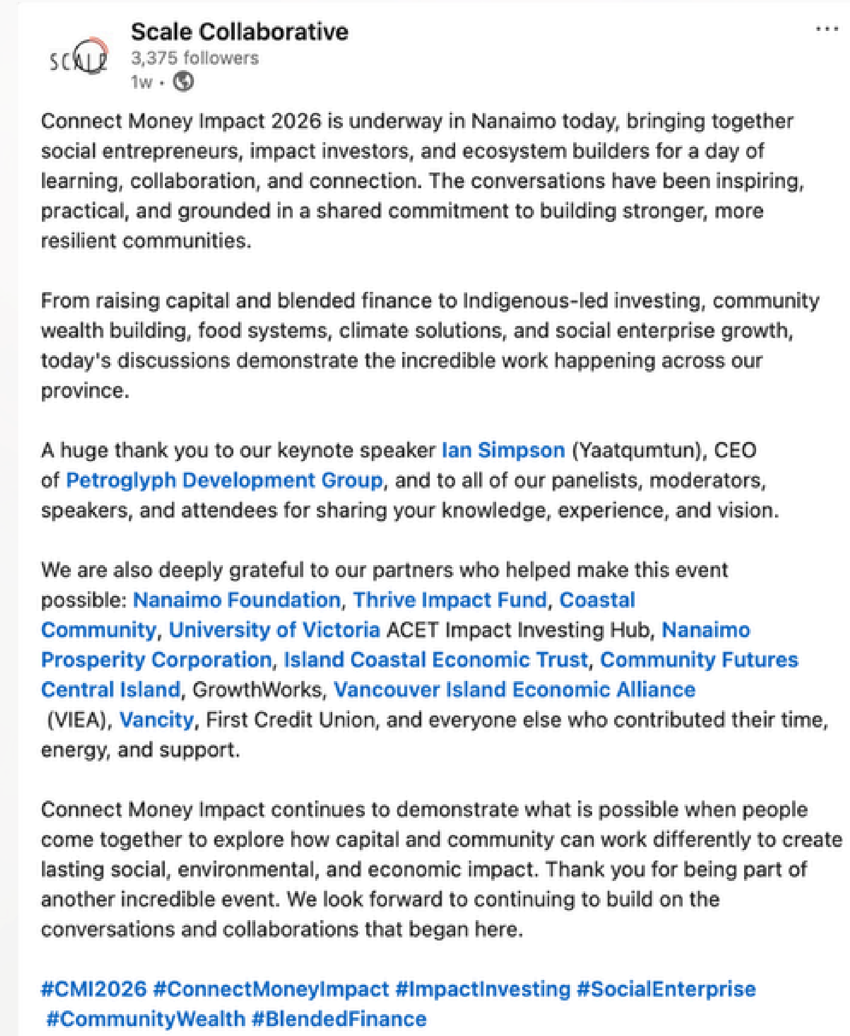
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Connect Money Impact 2026 is underway in Nanaimo today, bringing together social entrepreneurs, impact investors, and ecosystem builders for a day of learning, collaboration, and connection. The conversations have been inspiring, practical, and grounded in a shared commitment to building stronger, more resilient communities.

From raising capital and blended finance to Indigenous-led investing, community wealth building, food systems, climate solutions, and social enterprise growth, today's discussions demonstrate the incredible work happening across our province.

A huge thank you to our keynote speaker Ian Simpson (Yaatqumtun), CEO of Petroglyph Development Group, and to all of our panelists, moderators, speakers, and attendees for sharing your knowledge, experience, and vision.

We are also deeply grateful to our partners who helped make this event possible: Nanaimo Foundation, Thrive Impact Fund, Coastal Community, University of Victoria ACET Impact Investing Hub, Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation, Island Coastal Economic Trust, Community Futures Central Island, GrowthWorks, Vancouver Island Economic Alliance (VIEA), Vancity, First Credit Union, and everyone else who contributed their time, energy, and support.

Connect Money Impact continues to demonstrate what is possible when people come together to explore how capital and community can work differently to create lasting social, environmental, and economic impact. Thank you for being part of another incredible event. We look forward to continuing to build on the conversations and collaborations that began here.

#CMI2026 #ConnectMoneyImpact #ImpactInvesting #SocialEnterprise #CommunityWealth #BlendedFinance

Sessions

Social Enterprise Showcase

The morning showcase introduced four ventures tackling environmental and social challenges in ways that got the whole room talking.

Alison Evans, **Gulf Islands Seaplanes**, spoke about increasing Indigenous participation in aviation through pilot training and sustainable aviation innovation. Rather than treating underrepresentation as a barrier, she sees it as an opportunity. “Rather than waiting for change, we want to help create it.”

Brian Roberts, **Ergo Eco Solutions**, showed how one problem can become the solution to another. Ergo collects restaurant food waste and converts it into a low-carbon alternative to traditional road dust suppressants, cutting water use by 99% and greenhouse gas emissions by 98%. His invitation to the room: “Join the Rev’oil’ution!”

Hanna Hatherley and Daniel Raab, **Surfrider Foundation Canada**, introduced ReSurf, Canada’s first end-of-life surf industry recycling program. ReSurf repairs and upcycles wetsuits and surfboards that would otherwise end up in landfill, while collecting data that can inform future policy and regulatory change.

Rebecca Hurwitz, **Clayoquot Biosphere Trust**, shared the vision for the Clayoquot Sound Biosphere Centre, a shovel-ready project that will create permanent space for education, cultural programming, research, stewardship, and community gathering in Tofino. She spoke to the lack of safe and inclusive public space on the West Coast and described the project as “designed for community, learning and collaboration.”

GULF ISLAND SEAPLANES ergo ECO SOLUTIONS SURFRIDER FOUNDATION CANADA. clayoquot BIOSPHERE TRUST

Keynote Conversation: The Importance and Approach to Invest in Place

Ian Simpson of Petroglyph Development Group delivered one of the most talked-about conversations of the day. He walked the audience through how Petroglyph grew from a small economic development company into a diversified portfolio managing approximately $1 billion in assets. The ingredients he pointed to were stable governance, strategic acquisitions, access to affordable capital, and a discipline of reinvesting profits into community priorities like elder pensions, family support, education, and infrastructure.

What stayed with people was not the numbers. It was his insistence that economic development should serve people first: “The sole reason our corporation exists is to serve our Snuneymuxw people.”

“Indigenous economies are not emerging. They are resurging.”

– Ian Simpson, Petroglyph Development Group

Afternoon Breakout Sessions: Round One

Raising Capital: From Grants to Loans to Equity to Innovative Finance

Speakers: Ernest Barbaric; Jolynn Green, Community Futures Central Island/GrowthWorks; Micheala Arruda, Campbell River Community Foundation.

Ernest Barbaric got founders thinking like investors, focusing on investor psychology and the value of building relationships long before funding is needed. He reminded the room that equity financing means sharing future decision-making power. "The right kind of capital should support the mission, not pull the work away from it." Jolynn Green grounded the conversation in practical financing pathways, including community-based lending, and reminded attendees that strong planning and trusted relationships matter just as much as money.

Investing Locally through Blended Finance

Speakers: Kristi Fairholm Mader, Thrive Impact Fund; Omar Mawji, Weave Community Capital; Jill Bester, Genus Capital Management. Moderator: Joanna Buczkowska-McCumber, Ideas for Impact.

Kristi Fairholm Mader described Thrive as "a local place-based fund" and made the case that British Columbia needs more local investment opportunities to keep dollars working within the province. Omar Mawji explained how Weave acts as an anchor investor, using community bonds and institutional participation to help crowd in additional capital. Jill Bester shared Genus Capital Management's long history in impact investing and the satisfaction of driving past a local investment and saying, "We participated in that."

Social Enterprise Growth: Start-Up, Acquisitions and Expansion

Speakers: Kurt Johnson, Cleanstart; Kristi Rivait, Scale Collaborative; Paul Latour, Your Place. Moderator: Krystal Renschler, Mutatio Consulting.

This panel explored how social enterprises grow, whether by starting from scratch or by acquiring and expanding existing operations. Drawing on the direct experience of operators and the ecosystem builders who support them, the conversation covered what it takes to launch a social enterprise and when buying an existing business makes more sense than building one. Panelists also spoke to the realities of scaling while keeping the mission at the centre of every decision.

Investing in Place: Community Wealth, Ownership and Assets

Speakers: Tracey Brown, Nanaimo Foundation; Michel Woolner, Pacific Sport Vancouver Island; Ted Pahl, Island Crisis Care Society; Bruce Batchelor, Trelawny Consulting Group; Ben Geselbracht, City of Nanaimo.

Tracey Brown discussed strengthening local assets and aligning investment decisions with community resilience. Michel Woolner described the challenge of securing affordable facilities for sports programming and his interest in a shared community hub. Ted Pahl spoke about housing and wellness pathways that help people move from crisis to stable housing and employment, looking "beyond the balance sheet." Bruce Batchelor explained how community bridge financing supports local initiatives, and Ben Geselbracht discussed community land trusts as a way to keep wealth circulating locally.

Afternoon Breakout Sessions: Round Two

Investing in Place: Nature, Climate and Land-based Investment

Speakers: Laurel Sabur, ACET; Emily Mercy, GoParity; Peter Ord, Habitat Acquisition Trust.

This session highlighted the need for better information and alternative financing tools, with Indigenous stewardship at the centre. Laurel Sabur showed how shared data can reduce investor uncertainty, observing that communities "don't lack ambition, they lack a map of the capital." Emily Mercy explained how carbon credits can unlock financing for projects such as fleet electrification, encouraging attendees to "take off your institutional hat and see what YOU want to invest in." Peter Ord discussed nature-based resilience, including wetland restoration and Indigenous-led conservation.

Investing in Place: Food Systems, Agriculture and Supply Chains

Speakers: Erin Crampton, Transformational Investing in Food Systems; Graham Bradley, Good Earth Farm; Renea Dallas, 'Namgis First Nation; Faerlyn Marzoff, Lady Faer Designs; Johanna Mercedes, Fair Finance Fund.

Johanna Mercedes spoke about flexible financing that meets farmers where they are, "creating a box around a farmer rather than try to fit them in a box." Erin Crampton highlighted the fragmented nature of food-system investment and the challenge of time-bound grant programs. Graham Bradley spoke about farmland affordability and the need for accessible pathways into farming. Faerlyn Marzoff challenged attendees to turn underused green spaces into food-producing gardens, and Renea Dallas shared how Alert Bay's hydroponic pods improve food security while reconnecting generations.

Investing in Place: Sustainable and Green Industry

Speakers: Colin Stansfield, Nanaimo Prosperity Corporation; Claire Lewis, GRT; Josh Hunt, IGV Housing; Pat Brady, Genome BC/Industry Innovation.

Claire Lewis spoke candidly about the realities of scaling a green business, including regulatory uncertainty and the fact that many customers choose sustainable products because they are more affordable rather than because they are green. She emphasized how much engaged investors and supportive policy environments matter to companies like hers. The panel rounded out the conversation with perspectives on regional economic development and industry innovation, looking at what green businesses need to grow and attract capital on Vancouver Island.

Building an Enabling Environment for Social Enterprise and Impact Investing

Facilitator: Niamh O'Sullivan, Buy Social Canada.

This working session brought ecosystem builders together to ask a bigger question: what conditions does the social impact sector need to thrive in British Columbia? Facilitated by Niamh O'Sullivan of Buy Social Canada, the conversation moved past individual enterprises and investments to look at the systems around them, including public policy and the supports that help social enterprises and impact investors find each other. Participants left with a shared picture of the gaps to close and the role each organization can play in closing them.

Connecting Circles and Closing

The day closed with Connecting Circles, a facilitated matching session between investors, social enterprises and projects, and ecosystem builders. This is where the event's purpose came to life. Conversation prompts and rotating small-group discussions made it easy to build real relationships, even for the introverts in the room, and attendees named it their favourite part of the day. The event wrapped with closing remarks and recognition of partners, followed by one more hour of networking over drinks and snacks in the foyer, where plenty of business cards changed hands.

Thank you!

What We Heard: Evaluation Results

97% of respondents would recommend Connect Money Impact to others.

96% said Nanaimo was a great location and easy to get to.

What Worked

Attendees described Connect Money Impact as inspiring and well worth their time. Many called it one of the best networking events they had attended and asked for more like it, more often.

The strongest theme by far was the quality of connections. Participants pointed to the purposeful, facilitated networking as the standout feature of the day. They also valued:

- A strong sense of community and shared purpose that left attendees feeling energized and less isolated in their work.
- High-quality facilitation and a well-paced, organized day.
- Learning about innovative financing approaches and new investment opportunities in social enterprise.
- Meeting potential collaborators and funders across sectors they had not previously connected with.
- The thoughtful design of networking activities. Colour groupings and connection circles intentionally mixed the three tiers of attendees, and the day was grounded by the Indigenous welcome.

For Next Time

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and respondents identified refinements for future events:

- More time for networking and longer breakout sessions, with more room for audience discussion and workshop-style interaction.
- Fewer concurrent breakout sessions, or one or two additional keynotes, to reduce difficult choices between sessions.
- Clearer session information, including speaker profiles, summaries, schedules, and improved venue signage.
- Additional content on blended finance, community bonds, financing options for social enterprises, and climate and energy, plus greater participation from investors and growth-stage organizations.

Most respondents viewed these as refinements to an event they already considered highly successful, with many commenting that there was little or nothing they would change.

Where Next?

Respondents showed strong interest in keeping Connect Money Impact in British Columbia while rotating it to different communities. Vancouver received the most support, followed by Vancouver Island locations including Nanaimo, Victoria, Duncan/Cowichan, Port Alberni, Parksville, and the Comox Valley. There was also interest in Kelowna/Okanagan and smaller communities such as Squamish, Ucluelet, Tofino, Powell River/qathet, Gabriola Island, and the Sunshine Coast. Several respondents supported returning to Nanaimo, citing its central location and accessibility.

In Their Words

“This was the best one yet, you nailed the format. Simple, clear, space to talk, great food, snacks and beverages forever available. Kudos to the team!”

“I really enjoyed the smaller size of this event and the thoughtful approach you took to encourage the attendees to meet each other and discover opportunities for collaboration. The number of diverse connections I was able to make in a relatively short time was very valuable.”

“My first Connect Money Impact. I really had a great time. Very much worth the time and effort to participate. I will be singing the praise and look forward to attending again in the future.”

“Mussi Cho for your magical medicine in creating such a thoughtful and intentional experience for everyone.”

“Fantastic event, excellent connections and expertise.”

Outcomes for Partners

Through this event, partners were consistently recognized as key participants in the growth of BC’s social finance ecosystem. Partner brands were associated with leadership and community building, visible in digital channels and program materials, and reinforced through in-person acknowledgments.

More importantly, partner engagement helped support dozens of new relationships and collaborations that will strengthen BC’s social impact sector for years to come. With 97% of respondents saying they would recommend the event and Connecting Circles named the favourite part of the day, the connections partners made possible are the clearest measure of this event’s value.

Looking Forward

Connect Money Impact 2026 showed the growing demand for spaces where money and meaning intersect. Attendees asked for more of these gatherings, more often, and their feedback points to new themes and new communities for future events. Speakers and attendees kept coming back to the same idea: long-term resilience comes from combining financial capital with community ownership, Indigenous leadership, environmental stewardship, and strong local relationships.

To our partners, speakers, volunteers, and attendees: thank you for showing up and sharing so openly. You made this event what it was. We look forward to building on this momentum together.