

2026 Workplace Health and Safety Conference Workshop Leader Biographies



Michelle Ray – Keynote Speaker

Originally from Australia and now residing in Vancouver, Michelle Ray is an award-winning leadership keynote speaker, entrepreneur, author and educator who advocates the importance of developing self-leadership skills, regardless of one's title. She established her speaking, training and consulting business in 1995 and has since worked with many health and safety groups around the world, delivering her powerful messages on taking the lead, embracing change, building outstanding safety cultures and positive workplaces. Michelle was inducted into the Canadian Speaking Hall of Fame in December 2021.

Lucas Arsenault – Closing Speaker

Lucas Arsenault is an Islander, former professional kiteboarder who spent over a decade competing internationally, traveling and pushing the limits of performance. His life shifted dramatically after a sudden, life-altering injury that forced him to the very edge of his physical and mental limits. Surviving that experience, and navigating the long road of recovery, reshaped his understanding of resilience, identity and human capacity. In his presentation, Lucas shares his journey blending honesty, humour, and practical insight. Through his lived experiences, Lucas helps audiences rethink what's possible during life's hardest moments and find strength in steady daily progress.

Dr. Xander Wang - Professor of Climate Change & Adaptation, and Director of the Climate Smart Lab, UPEI

Dr. Xander Wang is a Professor in the School of Climate Change and Adaptation at UPEI, where he directs the Climate Smart Lab in the Canadian Centre for Climate Change and Adaptation. He is a fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society and a member of the Royal Society of Canada College of New Scholars. He has received numerous national and international awards for his pioneering contributions to climate change research.

Jeremy MacEachern – Education Consultant, WCB of PEI

Jeremy is an Education Consultant with the Occupational Health and Safety division of the Workers Compensation Board of PEI. In his role, he helps Island employers and workers understand their responsibilities under PEI's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Jeremy has worked in adult education for over 10 years and has a passion for helping people and promoting safety in the workplace. Jeremy received his Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education and Master of Business Administration from UPEI.

Verna Ryan - Prevail PEI Mental Health Solutions

Verna Ryan, MSW, is a professional with over 30 years' experience in high-risk workplaces including health care, first responder, child welfare and correctional environments. Her work in the private sector as a trauma responder focuses on supporting staff and organizations through critical incidents. Verna has established Prevail PEI Mental Health Solutions for high-risk workplaces. Her goal is to help organizations create environments where people feel supported, resilient and able to thrive.

WCB Claims and Compensation team

Discover how your workplace can better navigate claims and compensation through an engaging presentation by members of the WCB's Claims and Compensation team.

Jan Chappel – Senior Technical Specialist, CCOHS

Jan is a Senior Technical Specialist at the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), specializing in mental health, workplace safety and occupational hygiene. She leads the development of CCOHS's OSH Answers fact sheets and contributes to national e-learning and mobile safety resources used by organizations such as WorkSafe New Brunswick, WorkplaceNL, WCB PEI and WorkSafe Saskatchewan. Jan chairs Canadian Standards Association (CSA) technical committees on Occupational Health and Safety Training and Management of Impairment in the Workplace. She holds a Master of Health Science in Occupational Hygiene from the University of Toronto.

Michel Cyr – Manager of Investigations, WorkSafeNB

Michel brings extensive experience and a deep commitment to workplace safety. He has investigated hundreds of workplace incidents, including numerous fatalities, and has testified in court on criminal cases and at multiple coroner inquests. At WorkSafeNB, Michel created and implemented the investigations officer training and certification program, and champions an approach of transparency and honesty in every investigation. He believes health and safety should be simple, accessible and communicated in plain language. Michel's presentation draws on real case examples and focuses on helping employers understand and apply safety principles with clarity and confidence.

David Powers – Corporate Safety Manager, J.D. Irving

David has over 30 years of experience in health, safety and environmental management. He has held roles with organizations such as Caterpillar, Magna, Oxford Frozen Foods, Sysco, and the Government of New Brunswick. He is currently the Corporate Safety Manager for J.D. Irving in Moncton.

David obtained his Canadian Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) designation in 2005 and holds a master's degree in Occupational Safety and Health. He has taught OHS at Dalhousie University's College of Continuing Education and has contributed to OHS program development and delivery for the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia branches of the Excellence in Manufacturing Consortium, Aspire Atlantic, and Nova Scotia Works.

Maureen Cudmore – Air Quality and Health Specialist, Health Canada

Maureen Cudmore is an Air Quality and Health Specialist with Health Canada's Air Quality Program in Atlantic Canada. With 15 years of experience in environmental health risk assessment, she leads regional outreach on air pollution and wildfire smoke, advising health and emergency officials and supporting workplace and community preparedness. Her work focuses on practical strategies that reduce exposure, improve ventilation and filtration and communicate risks effectively during poor air quality and wildfire smoke events.