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.

Kaela Ballum - Health, Safety, and Environment Manager, Cavendish Farms

Recognized as one of the 2025 Top Women in Safety, Kaela Ballum, CRSP, NCSO, is a safety leader known for driving culture transformation, operational excellence, and advancing women in non-traditional industries. She brings over a decade of experience across offshore operations, oil sands, mining, agriculture, and manufacturing. Kaela is passionate about strengthening workplace culture, empowering emerging leaders, and championing women in the workforce. Known for her high-energy and authentic leadership style, she connects people, ideas, and action to create safer workplaces and stronger teams.

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.

John Debly – Health and Safety Consultant, WorkSafeNB

John Debly is a Health and Safety Consultant for WorkSafe NB. He assists with safety committees, consults with management, and conducts workshops and research. In addition, he assists employers in auditing, improving, and creating health and safety management systems. Over the years John has been extensively involved in health and safety education, training and development. He has designed and delivered training for colleges, ports, mines, and DND. John has a BA in communications, a BEd in adult vocational education, and a MSc in HS&E. He also attained his CRSP and New Brunswick Construction Safety Association (NBCSA) Construction Safety Coordinator designation.

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.

Katriona MacNeil– Occupational Hygienist, WCB of PEI

Katriona MacNeil is an occupational hygienist with WCB PEI. Her focus is helping workplaces prevent exposures to chemicals, noise, and other hazards that are easily overlooked, but often have long-term health consequences. MacNeil has 15+ years of OHS experience in government and industry roles. Her proficiencies include hazard analysis, workplace chemical sampling, health and safety training, and program development. MacNeil holds a Master's Degree from McGill University in Occupational Health (2013) and is a Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH).