



PSAC North Regional Health & Safety Conference
Strong Foundations – Strong Safety Culture Built on Strong Foundations
April 20&21,2024
Yellowknife, NT

It takes a village to build a conference like this. PSAC staff and members working together to plan and build a vision and then putting it together. Then the most important part, you, the delegates and guests arriving in Yellowknife with speakers and facilitators to make it come alive. It is so exciting!!!! In no particular order are the people who are involved in making **Strong Foundations – Strong Safety Culture Built on Strong Foundations** a wonderful PSAC North H&S Conference.

Guests

Jamey Mills, Regional Executive Vice-President, British Columbia

Jamey Mills was re-elected as the PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President for British Columbia in May 2023. He was first elected as REVP in June 2017.

Jamey is a long-time union leader who started his journey as an activist by serving as the young workers coordinator on the PSAC BC Regional Council and as a member of the BC Federation of Labour Young Worker Committee, where he sat on the BC Fed Executive Council.

He was first elected regional executive vice-president in 2017 and sits on the Alliance Executive Committee, where he represents members in British Columbia and helps set PSAC's national direction. In British Columbia, he chairs and coordinates the work of the PSAC BC Regional Council.

Jamey chairs the PSAC National Board of Directors Health and Safety Committee and the Environment Committee and sits on the Representation Committee. He is also the AEC officer responsible for Canada Food Inspection Agency Group bargaining.

Sharon DeSousa, National Executive Vice-President

Sharon DeSousa was elected as the national executive vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada, a position she has held since September 2020, at PSAC's 19th National Triennial Convention in June 2022. She was first elected PSAC's alternate NEVP at the 2018 National Convention.

She became the first racialized regional executive vice-president (REVP) for Ontario in PSAC's history in 2011 and was subsequently re-elected in 2014 and 2017.

Sharon began her career in the public service when she joined Human Resources Development Canada in 1998. Prior to working for the union full-time, Sharon was a benefits officer with Service Canada. She was elected as vice-president of equity for her local, Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU) Local 00648.

A passionate, driven and experienced leader within the labour movement, Sharon has a strong interest in grassroots activism and political action. She is committed to breaking down barriers, building a more inclusive and equitable labour movement, and raising employment standards for all workers.

PSAC North Members

Josee- Anne Spirito, REVP, PSAC North

Josée-Anne lives in Yellowknife and is dedicated to defending human rights. She was born and raised in Montreal but considers the Northwest Territories her home. Her passion for helping people inspired her to become a nurse and join the labour movement. She believes that union activism can make a real difference in peoples' lives and is fully committed to the fight. She has been a proud member of PSAC and the Union of Northern Workers Local 33 since 2013, where she served as Second Vice-President. She has been involved in numerous bargaining negotiations with the GNWT. She understands the unique challenges Northern communities face and is committed to decolonizing collective agreements and ensuring that solutions are tailored to the lived experiences of our members. Josée-Anne Spirito was elected

PSAC Regional Executive Vice-President for the North at the 9th Regional Triennial Convention held in May 2023.

Derek Allerton, Conference Co-Chair and Steering Committee

I have worked for the Qulliq Energy Corporation (QEC) in Iqaluit since 2017. I am currently the Health and Safety Specialist in the HSE Dept. at QEC.

I have been involved in the union since 2018 when I became Chair of the PSAC-North Nunavut Health and Safety Committee. I currently hold that role along with being VP of Local 007, Nunavut Employees Union, which represents Qulliq Energy workers.

I became interested in health and safety back in 1998 when I was asked to sit on my workplace health and safety committee. Once I was assigned health and safety for the workplace as a supervisor in 2000 and faced with a corporate safety program I did not understand, I decided to learn as much as I could within the employer's safety program and then outside by completing an Occupational Health and Safety Certificate with the University of Alberta. I became a full-time safety professional in 2013 while residing in Atlantic Canada, and then became a Safety Officer with the WSCC in 2015 when I moved to Nunavut. I obtained my Canadian Registered Safety Professional designation in 2017.

Why did I become interested in workplace health and safety? It is my fundamental belief that workers should not be injured at work and that everyone deserves to go home injury free every day to their family. Safety rules and regulations are in place to make sure that happens. I feel that advocating for health and safety holds employers to account on their contract responsibilities and legal duties.

I find most areas of health and safety interesting. It is an environment that is continually changing and expanding. The biggest shift I have seen during my career is the increasing regulations around violence in the workplace and how much it now encompasses.

My current hobbies are camping, Dutch Oven cooking, and Swiss Army Knives. I have a teenage son, a tween daughter, a friendly dog, and most recently a cat (for my daughter).

Lisa Keenan, Conference Co-Chair and Steering Committee

I work in Education at Yukon Government. I've worked in a tribal council, and I was a federal employee prior to that. I've worked in Government all my life. I've been actively involved with the union since 2014. I am currently the President of my Local, Y010 with 2000+ members, I am a Director for our component the Yukon Employees Union. I am the Vice-president of the Yukon Federation of Labour. I am a Shop Steward and I participate in H&S, Women's, Indigenous and Access Committees. I am also on the Yukon Area Council and the PSAC National collective bargaining committee. Health & Safety is important to me because it involves everyone. With some active participation we can ensure members are safe, wherever they are working. I have a daughter named Kèhme Sè (means morning sunrise) and a son named Justice. A one-year-old grandson named Shàr (means bear), and a cute puppy named Fraisa. My spouse is François from Quebec and we love traveling.

Patty Martinez, PSAC North Regional Health & Safety Conference Co-Chair and Steering Committee

Patty is a Child Youth and Family counsellor in Inuvik, and she is a clinical social worker. With years of experience spanning both the NWT and Ontario, she has actively participated in various labor-management committees and task forces, advocating for social welfare, subsidized childcare, housing, universal childcare, human rights, and anti-racism initiatives. My roles have included serving as a shop steward and contributing to employment equity efforts.

Growing up in a family of committed trade unionists, I've been inspired by my father's unwavering dedication to worker rights, workplace safety, and gender equality. His legacy fuels my passion for union activism and advocacy.

My father's contributions to the trade union movement were profound. He tirelessly fought against the injustices perpetuated by transnational corporations, advocating for fair wages, safe working conditions, and the rights of workers to organize. Tragically, he lost his life in this struggle, but his courage and commitment continue to inspire me every day.

From a young age, I've been driven to address the unique risks faced by women in different industries, considering factors such as gender, industry, race, and class. My focus extends to various aspects of occupational health and safety, including psychosocial ergonomics, worksite analysis, and risk prevention. I am particularly passionate about tackling psychological hazards like high workloads, recognizing their significant impact on worker well-being and long-term health.

Beyond my professional pursuits, I find joy in dancing, cooking, quilting, and maintaining an active lifestyle, aiming to complete 10,000 steps each day. These hobbies help me maintain balance and wellness in both my personal and professional life.

PSAC North Staff

Tara Boyd, PSAC North – Yellowknife Regional Office, Administrative Assistant

I have been working with PSAC North for 7 years. A big part of my job is arranging travel with staff and members, booking hotels, member reimbursements and making sure everything is paid. The areas of my job that I enjoy most are assisting members and organizing things.

Workplace safety started to interest me after I started working with Ekati – BHP Billiton in 2011. H&S is most important for mines and wanted to learn at the weekly safety meetings and presentations. My son and partner are employed in Building Trades, so we have a lot of H&S discussions.

Managing a work/life balance and how it impacts physical and mental health is probably one of the most important factors of workplace H&S for me. I enjoy travel as well as games and activities with friends.

I find myself to be a safe person. The worst thing that has ever happened to me is I fell uphill when I was 4 years old and required a butterfly bandage.

Judy Payne, PSAC North – Yellowknife Regional Office, Secretary

Judy was a member of PSAC for 12 years and she has worked for PSAC for 17 years. She is originally from Tuktoyaktuk. Judy is usually the first person members meet at our office or conferences and whether she is ordering supplies, registering delegates or streamlining a process she makes it look effortless. She enjoys her job because every day is different, and no two days are alike.

Judy enjoys the Human Rights and Social Justice aspects of PSAC work the most. The networking with other Social Justice groups and particularly a rally or a march. Her favourite off time pursuits are spending time with her family, traveling and reading.

Francois Picard, PSAC North – Yellowknife Regional Office, Regional Coordinator

Francois has been working with PSAC since 2023. Prior to this he worked for the Nunavut Employees' Union. He has been in unionized positions a few times throughout my career. While not a union position per se, one of his proudest moments was working to elect former PSAC National President Nycole Turmel as a Member of Parliament.

He has attended the April 28th Day of Mourning for Persons Killed or Injured in the Workplace for the last ten years or so and hearing from the families who lost their loved ones is a yearly reminder of the importance of workplace H&S.

At the personal level, Francois's partner started working in the trades, some of the risks she faces in the workplace have felt much more concrete. Since then, he has learned more about psychological health and safety and ergonomic injuries that all workers can face, whether you're handling large machinery or not!

For Francois, it's about mobilisation – learning more about how workers can have a greater impact on their working conditions and their workplace through H&S activism.

He is very much the “union guy” in his family but last fall, his sister and nephew who are teachers in Quebec were on strike for several weeks. Their struggle and experience inspire him to keep fighting for workers every day.

Dawn Skinner, PSAC North – Yellowknife Regional Office, Reginal Representative

Dawn has been a PSAC Regional Representative for the Yellowknife office since 2021. She finds the work varied and exciting. Her favourite parts of work are learning from union members every day and assisting to create strong safety cultures in workplaces.

First union experience was with Cape Breton Railway and Transportation Union which later amalgamated with Unifor. After moving to Yellowknife, she became involved with PSAC and UNW. Over the course of years she had held every position within a local but her favourite experience was organizing Sodexo employees at Stanton Hospital.

She studied psychology/ sociology before studying Business Administration & Hospitality. The Hospitality Industry and the unrecognized effects on workers' health inspired her to study Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental Systems.

Dawn's passion for workplace health & safety began as a teenager. Witnessing her grandfather's health issues after his lifetime spent in coal mines inspired her to share that "being hurt is not a part of the job."

Others who came to contribute to the Conference

Vernon Theriault

"Vernon Theriault was off shift when the Westray mine exploded in 1992, killing twenty-six men in Plymouth, Nova Scotia. Theriault took part in the perilous rescue operation that followed, as the small community hoped against hope that survivors would be found. As the magnitude of Westray took hold, Theriault found himself struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder and nightmares. When he tried to re-educate himself for another line of work, he discovered that he was both illiterate and dyslexic. Theriault found new purpose when he became part of a labour movement that successfully lobbied the federal government to bring in a worker-safety law that became known as the Westray Bill. Theriault collaborated with his cousin Marjorie Coady to write a book. Theriault openly discusses his complicated journey in his straightforward manner, which begins with, "... the promise of a good job with good pay at Westray."

Lila Fraser Erasmus

Lila Fraser Erasmus is a descendent of the Dene Cree from Fort Chipewyan, Alberta on her father's side and of the Northern Tutchone people of Mayo, Yukon on her mother's side. Her two children are a part of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) from Akaitcho Territory in Denendeh (otherwise known as the Northwest Territories). For the past 25 years, they have all lived in the Yellowknives Dene Community of Ndilo, the home of approximately 300 YKDFN members.

Over the course of her career, she has been involved with managing several initiatives with GNWT, private sector and non-profit organizations. Lila has worked at supporting community initiatives that promote Indigenous ways of healing through ceremony, spending time on the land and nurturing relationships.

Ebube Ojukwu

Ebube is a Nigerian Canadian who has called Canada her second home for the past 14 years. She currently practices in Bechoko and other areas of the NT. Her expertise in counselling is in racial identity, trauma and PTSD, depression, and self esteem. Ebube will be available all through the conference to provide support for emotional and mental health.

Gerri Sharpe

Gerri grew up in Yellowknife, Gjoa Haven, Cambridge Bay – a variety of areas in the North and some in Nova Scotia. I learned to sew from friends and community elders in Gjoa Haven when she wanted her kids to have traditional kamiks. Gerri likes to work with sealskin, makes sheared beaver mitts, does beadwork and works with qiviut to crochet beautiful clothes. Gerri is a proud Inuk woman with a commitment to uplifting and safeguarding the rights of women, especially those within the Inuit community and is passionate about Human Rights.