

AN INTERGENERATIONAL DISCUSSION

Climate Anxiety in the Public Service

Environment and Climate Change Canada's
National Youth Network (ECCC NYN)



Antonia Macris (she/her)

Manager, Corporate Learning & NYN Co-Chair - ECCC

Antonia Macris is the Manager of Corporate Learning at ECCC, leading employee mandatory training, corporate priorities and departmental learning policies. She has an interdisciplinary background, holding an MA in Educational Technology, MEnv in Environmental Assessment and GrDip in PR and Communications Management, with past experience at ESDC, in higher education institutions and with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

Antonia joined the National Youth Network (NYN) as Co-Chair in 2024 and enjoys contributing to Departmental and Interdepartmental initiatives, such as GCWCC, LearnX, Take Me With You, and NCR Young Professionals Network.

As a proud public servant and youth leader, Antonia received a 2024 ECCC Deputy Minister Instant Award as NYN Co-Chair, 2024 ECCC Departmental Award for her Team's development of Climate Literacy courses, was a New HR Talent notable nominee for the 2024 HR Council Government of Canada HR Excellence Awards, and in 2025 had the honour of being awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal and Quebec National Assembly Medal for her contributions to her community and Canada in youth leadership.



Mireta Strandberg-Salmon (she/her)

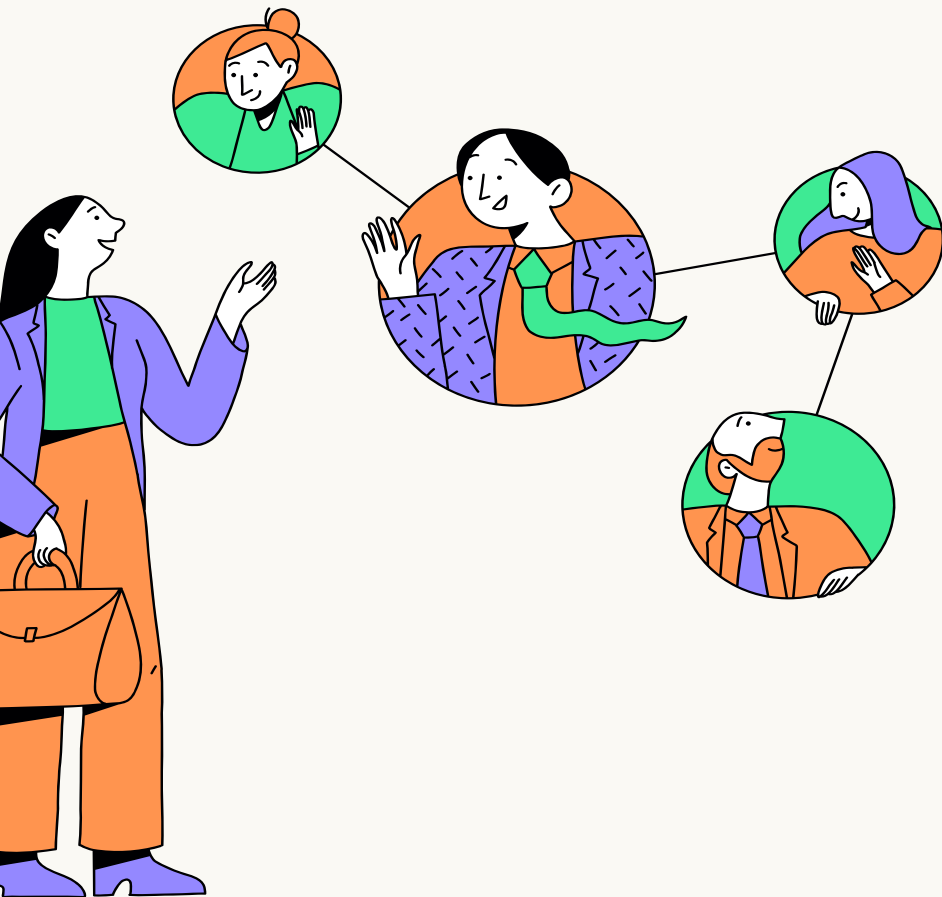
Policy Analyst & NYN Co-Chair - ECCC

Mireta joined ECCC's Strategic Policy Directorate in 2022 after working as a co-op student in different roles within ECCC and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. She joined ECCC's NYN as Co-Chair in 2023 to help uplift youth voices in departmental policies and programming. As a Policy Analyst, Mireta has worked on a range of policy files including circular economy, behavioural science, and government transition.

Mireta is intent on advancing climate justice, circular economy, and sustainability at school, at work, and in her community. For example, Mireta successfully led campaigns to end the sale of single-use plastics like bottled water at both her high school and her university, Simon Fraser University. Through her efforts, she was recognized as a Top 25 Environmentalist Under 25 by The Starfish Canada in 2022.



Our Mandate



To support meaningful engagement for youth employees across ECCC, the National Youth Network (NYN) facilitates and promotes:

- career development
- networking opportunities
- open communication & community building
- intersectionality

The NYN's mandate is to bring a youth perspective on various topics, including diversity and inclusion and Values and Ethics renewal.

Employee Assistance Program

The **Employee Assistance Program** offers culturally competent short-term mental health support for employees *and* family members in over 90 federal organizations. The program is free, voluntary and confidential.

The program is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week** both over the phone or online.

Telephone: 1-800-268-7708
Telephone: 1-800-567-5803 (digital service for those who are deaf or hard of hearing)
Online Chat Service

What is climate
anxiety?

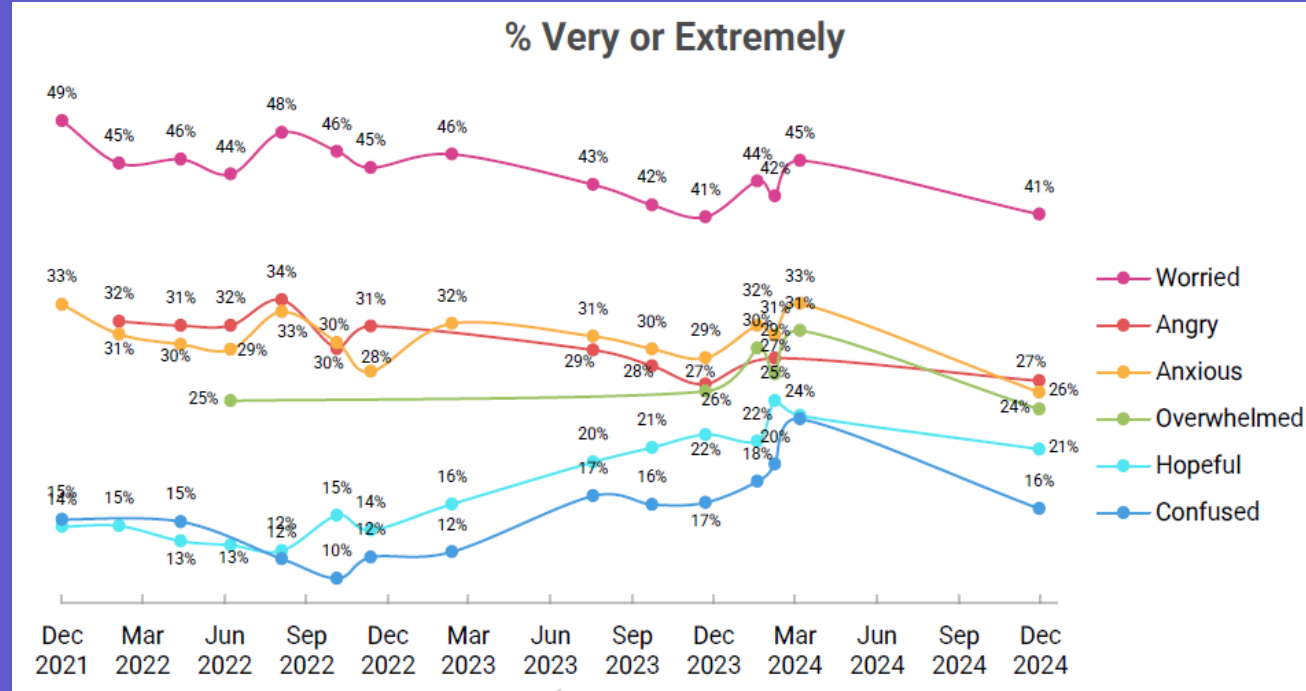


Understanding climate emotions

Climate change and other environmental issues can cause people to experience a wide range of emotions.

Climate anxiety: distress related to the effects of environmental issues on the landscape and human existence.

Image: Jono Hey, [Sketchplanations](#)



Program of Applied Research on Climate Action survey:

“How do you currently feel about the issue of climate change?”

In 1999, there were
368.38 ppm
carbon in the atmosphere.

Today, there are
421.55 ppm
carbon in the atmosphere.

That's an increase of
↑ 53.17 ppm
during your lifetime thus far.

The Nature Conservancy:

How much CO2 was in the atmosphere the year you were born?

Climate Emotions Wheel



Climate Emotions Wheel © 2024



Climate
Mental Health
Network

ClimateMentalHealth.Net

Why it matters to the federal public service

Climate anxiety threatens employee wellbeing and productivity

- 43% of workers experience eco-anxiety often (across all age groups) (1).
- Productivity losses associated with anxiety cost an estimated \$17 billion per year in Canada (2).

The GoC risks losing out on talent and reduced employee retention

- Risk of burnout for those working in environmental fields.
- For youth, there can be growing tension between public service duties and personal values. Without support, young employees may choose to find employment elsewhere that is more empowering and purposeful.



Climate emotions also affect the communities we serve

Sources:

1. The Conference Board Survey, 2023
2. Healthy Brains at Work: Estimating the Impact of Workplace Mental Health Benefits and Programs - The Conference Board of Canada

Climate care at ECCC's National Youth Network



The NYN takes a hope-based approach to address climate anxiety. Our initiatives include:

- Monthly Drop-in Climate Coffee Chats
- Climate Care Corner in the NYN Newsletter
- Eco-Anxiety Speaker Series to provide access to environmental education and address concerns youth have regarding climate anxiety and emotions. Recent talks include:
 - Dr. Lindsay Galway: Climate Anxiety in Youth and How to Cope
 - Abhay Singh Sachal: Understanding Youth Eco-Anxiety and Climate Justice
- Future work: formal climate anxiety training and support

Panel Discussion

Reflection Questions

- Are you concerned about climate change? Do you or your employees talk about climate anxiety in the workplace?
- What emotions do you experience surrounding climate change?
- What terms resonate with you? Climate compassion, climate care, climate anxiety, eco-anxiety?



Michael Bonser

Associate Assistant Deputy Minister & Youth Champion - ECCC

Michael Bonser currently serves as the Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of the Strategic Policy and International Affairs Branch at Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). Prior to this role, he served for one year as Director General, Multilateral Affairs and Chief Climate Negotiator, a position he held since September 2023.

Michael brings 24 years of experience from Global Affairs Canada, where he held numerous senior roles. His leadership positions included Director General, European Affairs (2022-2023), Executive Director of the G7/G20 Summits Team (2018-2022), Minister Counsellor and Political Coordinator at Canada's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York (2013-2018), and Director of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response (2010-2013). Notably, he was part of the interdepartmental team recognized with the Public Service Award of Excellence in 2010 for Canada's response to the January 12, 2010, Haiti earthquake.

Since 1999, Michael has held a variety of policy and management positions within Global Affairs Canada's International Security Branch, where he developed a strong background in humanitarian affairs and international security policy. Before joining Global Affairs, Michael served as a Legislative Assistant in the Parliament of Canada and worked in the non-profit sector, focusing on human rights advocacy and protection.

Michael holds a Master's degree in International Relations from Acadia University and an Honours B.A. in History and Political Studies from Queen's University. He has published several articles on humanitarian intervention and peacebuilding.



Paul MacDonald (he/him)

Director & Indigenous Employees Network Co-Chair - ECCC

Paul is a member of the Moose Cree First Nation and additionally has family connections to Labrador Inuit. As a result, Paul grew up moving back and forth between Northern Ontario and Central Labrador, where he currently resides.

Paul has been with Environment and Climate Change Canada since 2006, starting as a Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) biologist in Ontario Region (Downsview) before moving to Labrador (Goose Bay) in 2009. In 2023, Paul assumed the role of director of the newly created Indigenous Science Division within the Science and Technology Branch. Since 2018, he has also been a co-chair of ECCC's Indigenous Employees Network.

Prior to working at ECCC, Paul worked for Natural Resources Canada – Canadian Forest Service, Moose Cree First Nation Lands and Resources Department, Western Newfoundland Model Forest Network, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.



Paige Hunter (she/her)

Research Analyst & NYN Climate Anxiety Subcommittee Lead - ECCC

Paige is a climate organizer with over a decade of experience in climate action. At ECCC, she supports the Environment and Climate Change Youth Council, the National Framework for Environmental Learning, and youth engagement across the department.

Beyond her work at ECCC, she co-leads the [sword fern collective](#), an emotions-centered community engagement organization that bridges climate action with arts and culture.

She is a producer on the 2024 film Stories of Change about climate solutions in Bangladesh that premiered at COP28, a 2024 Sustainability Mentor with the Vancouver School Board, and was an advisor on the Metro Vancouver Youth and Education Advisory Panel from 2023-2025. She was one of Simon Fraser University's youth delegates to COP27 and was named one of Canada's Top 25 Environmentalists Under 25 in 2024 by the Starfish Canada.

She is a guest on the unceded and shared territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and səlilwətał Nations in what is currently known as Vancouver.



Rachel Malena-Chan (she/her)

Policy Analyst - ECCC

Rachel Malena-Chan (she/her) is an Outreach Specialist with the Canadian Centre for Climate Services (CCCS), where she brings together her passion for storytelling and her commitment to climate action.

Rachel holds a Master of Science in Population Health. Her research focused on developing frameworks for overcoming ‘narrative dissonance’ about the climate crisis, exploring the role of stories in shaping identity, capacity, and systems change.

Outside of her work with the CCCS, Rachel runs Eco-Anxious Stories, a web-based platform she created to gather stories and resources related to the intersection of mental health and climate change. Through all aspects of her work in climate communications, Rachel uses narrative-based strategies to help others engage and connect meaningfully.

She resides in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homelands of the Métis.



Erin Murray (she/her)

Policy Advisor - ECCC

Erin Murray is a Policy Advisor at Environment and Climate Change Canada. She is passionate about increasing dialogue around mental wellness and inclusivity in the workplace.

Erin is a member of the Federal Speakers' Forum on Lived Experience and shares her personal experiences of mental illness and neurodiversity, along with practical tools that have helped her manage stress and build resilience.

Through her story, Erin hopes to inspire more inclusive and supportive work environments where mental health can be discussed openly.



Let's Take Action Towards Building a Resilient Future.



Climate Literacy from ECCC to CSPS

Climate literacy for public servants means improving our ability to recognize how a changing climate affects our mandates and our ability to deliver on them.

Three course suite provides an understanding on:

- the foundational knowledge needed to understand the science of climate change
- changing climate means for Canada and its citizens
- how to contribute to a climate-resilient, net-zero-emissions Canada
- why climate literacy is an essential part of serving Canadians
- Climate change solutions and the role of public servants

[Applying Climate Literacy Foundations \(CHC101\)](#)

[Contributing to a Net-Zero Canada \(CHC102\)](#)

[Adapting to Climate Change in Canada \(CHC103\)](#)

Resources

Learning

- [Understanding and Coping with Eco-Anxiety](#) (Mental Health Commission of Canada)

Reading

- Digital zine: [Solastalgia by Solastalgia Zine – Issuu](#)
- Study on education for eco/anxiety: [A systematic review of empirical studies about eco/climate anxiety and environmental education](#)

Tips

- Resources and tip sheets: [Resources | Climate Mental Health Network](#)

Vision for climate care in the federal government

Vision

Employees' climate emotions are a productive outlet for aligned efforts at work and in our communities to address climate change while building resilience and hope.

Proposal

To create an interdepartmental community of practice on climate anxiety for sharing knowledge and resources, initiated by the ECCC NYN with PCO and FYN support.

Implementation

- Membership from YPNs and interested colleagues across departments
- Venue to explore solutions like formal support and training on climate anxiety
- Opportunity to secure funding for speakers and hybrid events open to all federal departments
- Discussions on approach to increase climate literacy and eco-anxiety awareness across federal family
- Discussions on values and ethics in a time of climate crisis

Get involved & take action



Join the interdepartmental community for responding to climate anxiety among federal employees.

Take breaks from the urgency of it all. Take action when you have capacity.

Encourage brave space discussions among employees.

Interested in learning more?
Contact the ECCC National Youth Network:
reseaunationaldesjeunes-nationalyouthnetwork@ec.gc.ca