

## 2024 Annual General Meeting – Speaker Bios

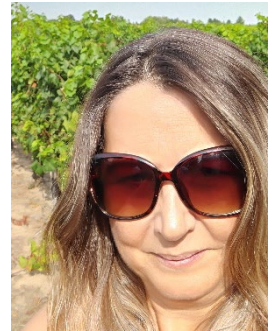


### **Albert Devries, Canadian Honey Council Rep**

A former commercial balloon pilot, Albert has been beekeeping for more than 20 years and is currently managing the colonies at Clovermead Apiaries. Albert and his family live in St. Thomas and is active in the local Middlesex, Oxford, Elgin Beekeepers' Association. Albert is the current Canadian Honey Council representative for the OBA.

### **Rebecca Metzger, Agricorp**

Rebecca Metzger, Sr. Industry Specialist, in the Program, Development Division with Agricorp. She specializes in industry relations and product management and has been in this role for 15+ years. Her area of focus is Business Risk Management Programs for the Horticultural Sector, focusing on the fruit and apiculture industry, including bee and honey sectors.



### **Joel Laberge, Miellerie St-Stanislas**



Joel Laberge is a second-generation beekeeper with a lifelong dedication to the craft. He is married and the proud father of four children (two sons and two daughters), all of whom are actively involved in different branches of the family business. Now celebrating its 64th year, the family beekeeping enterprise has been a source of innovation in the industry, most notably with the invention of the creaming machine. Joel's commitment to advancing beekeeping technology extends to establishing Canada's first fully climate-controlled automated wintering chamber and has converted to refrigerated trucking hive management system that has been operational for the past 15 years. What began in 1960 with two hives has grown to a remarkable operation managing between 1,500 to 2,000 hives annually. Today, the business is divided into several specialized branches: Miellerie St-Stanislas: Oversees the beehives, focusing on pollination, honey

production, and queen breeding. Stanabbey: Supplies beekeeping essentials, including packaged bees, nucs, queens, and bee nutrition. Creampal Equipments: Designs and manufactures machinery for creamed honey production. Miel Laberge: Handles honey marketing and sales, managed by Joel's son, Sebastien.



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## Brian Rowaan, B & E Honeyfields

Brian began working in the Ontario bee industry for Charlie Parker in 1995 at the age of 12. He worked for the Parker family throughout high school and several years afterwards. He then worked a season in New Zealand before buying his first bees in 2005. Together with his wife Erin, they grew B&E Honey Fields to be the largest honey producer in Ontario. Brian and Erin manage over 10,000 migratory colonies in Niagara, Grey, Bruce and all-over Northern Ontario. Their honey house resides in Noelville, and all colonies are wintered in Niagara on the Lake. In the spring they move all their hives for wild blueberry pollination, primarily in New Brunswick. Over the years, Brian has served as a director on the OBA board, as the treasurer, and as the Canadian Honey Council representative. Their honey is primarily sold wholesale, but in 2023 opened a store on their property in NOTL and the retail growth has been rapid. Brian and Erin have 3 boys - 9, 12, and 14.



## Paul Kozak, Provincial Apiarist, OMAFA:

Paul Kozak is the Provincial Apiarist for Ontario, based in Guelph, Ontario with OMAFA since 2010. This role includes regulation of the beekeeping industry in Ontario, working closely with provincial Apiary Inspectors, reporting on the status of the industry, providing technical and strategic advisory to government and industry regarding apiculture and collaborating with other specialists in apiculture on programs. Paul holds a BSc in Zoology and an MSc in Entomology, both the University of Manitoba.

## Davey Hackenburg, Hackenberg Apiaries

Davey Hackenberg is the son of David Hackenberg, who began keeping bees as an FFA project in 1962 at Mifflinburg Area High School. By the time he graduated high school he had already started his own business maintaining several hundred hives. Davey Hackenberg now owns and operates Hackenberg Apiaries. Hackenberg Apiaries is a third-generation operation. They are involved in the areas of pollination, custom beeswax rendering and sales, honey production and sales, custom bottling, natural bee products and more.



## **Dr. Brendan Daisley, University of Guelph:**

Dr. Brendan Daisley is a Banting Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Guelph and the current SFA President of the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP). He graduated from his PhD in Microbiology & Immunology at Western University in 2021. Brendan has a broad range of experience in environmental application of probiotics to honey bees. During his PhD, he helped coordinate several large field trials across North America (mostly in Ontario and California). Ultimately, his research goals are to improve beekeeping practices through the management of both beneficial and pathogenic microorganisms associated with honey bees.



## **Dr. Alvaro De la Mora, University of Guelph**



Alvaro has a Ph.D. degree from the Honey Bee Research Centre (HBRC), University of Guelph, and a M.Sc. degree in Animal Production where he studied *Nosema ceranae*. He has nearly 16 years of international experience in management and research. He has participated in different research projects; thus, he is author or coauthor of 16 scientific publications. His graduate project involved selecting honey bee populations for lower rates of Varroa population growth (LVG), and it was in collaboration with the HBRC, the OBA, and the OBBA. Alvaro received the EAS Student Award 2022, the NAPPC Honey Bee Health Improvement Grant 2022, and the CAPA Student merit award at the PhD level 2021. The methodology used for selecting bees for LVG became included as part of the Ontario Resistant Honey Bee Selection Program (ORHBS).

## **Wissarut Sukhaket, University of Guelph**

Wissarut is a PhD student at the University of Guelph's Honey Bee Research Centre, where he studies honey bee health and behaviour under the guidance of Dr. Ernesto Guzman. He has seven years of experience as an environmentally friendly agriculture extensionist at Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research, where he researched arabica coffee pollinators, focusing on honey bees and stingless bees in agroforestry areas in northern Thailand. His present project investigates the impact of adding nutraceuticals to protein diets on bee longevity, memory and foraging behaviour, and colony performance.



## Charliese Wand & Meg Doran, OBA TTP



Charliese attended the University of Guelph and completed her degree in marine and freshwater biology, with a minor in ecology. Although Charliese's degree surrounds aquatic life, she has always had a desire to learn about and work with honey bees. Charliese was first introduced to beekeeping as a child, when her family started a small hobby apiary in 2014.

Meg has been fascinated by bees ever since she was a young child. During her first year at the University of Guelph, where she majored in Biological Science, she decided to take a course on bees that resulted in a deeper understanding and appreciation of honey bees. Ever since, she has been pushing her family to begin beekeeping and hopes to have her own hives soon.



## Michel Melanson, P. Ag. Crop Development Specialist, Blueberry and Apiculture



Mike completed a B.Sc. (Agr) from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in 1991. He began his career with the Province of NB in 1992, working as Plant Health Technologist with the Plant Industry Branch. I acquired my Professional Agrologist designation in 1996. I began working as Provincial Blueberry Specialist in 1999. In 2003, the Pollination Development portfolio was included as a provincial responsibility. Mike has worked with these two industries since that time. The yearly activities include industry development (identification and allocation of new blueberry land for production), research and innovation of pest management techniques, extension and educational services to the sectors and other administrative duties.

## Peter Chorabik & Kate Beusaert, Toronto Bee Rescue:



Peter Chorabik is the owner of Toronto Bee Rescue. He runs around 1100 hives around the GTA from Toronto to Dufferin County. Peter Started beekeeping in 2012 with two hives and has steadily grown his operation year over year. In 2024, Peter sent his first truck load of bees into blueberry pollination.

Kate Beusaert grew up in a farming family and has always had an interest in honey bees. She got the opportunity to beekeep with Toronto Bee Rescue in 2022 as a summer student, where she got experience managing bees at a commercial scale. She worked at Toronto Bee Rescue the following summer and played an important role in preparing the operation for blueberry pollination in 2024.





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## Doug McRory, Bill Ferguson, Ed Woods & Roger Congdon

In his last year of highschool, Doug McRory became a friend of Harold Bryans of Chatsworth Honey. Harold took Doug out to the bees several times that summer. That same year, Doug's brother bought two hives, but became injured, and Doug took on those two hives. And the love of bees began. The next summer Doug worked for Stanley Bryans (500 colonies). He went on to study Apiculture and Entomology at the University of Guelph. He was Provincial Apiarist of Manitoba from 1967-71 and then a commercial beekeeper in Manitoba until 1983. In 1985, he became the Provincial Apiarist for Ontario and remained in that position until 2009. During that time, Doug dealt with the introduction of tracheal mites, Varroa mites, and more. Now retired, Doug continues to keep bees.



Bill Ferguson, the founder of Ferguson Apiaries, has raised bees in Huron County, Ontario for almost 60 years. Ferguson Apiaries produces Buckfast queen bees and nucs for beekeepers across the United States and Canada. Bill believes the current stock of bees is superior to any they've ever worked with. He works exclusively with Buckfast stock. Ferguson Apiaries has been part of the ORHBS breeding program since it's inception.

Ed Woods started commercial beekeeping in 1954. At its peak, Woods Apiaries maintained over 1800 colonies in Simcoe County. Ed is a life-long learner, always asking what is the latest in beekeeping research, while also being a mentor for others around him. In spite of the very many challenges that the industry has faced over the past 70 years, Ed has weathered them all and continues to maintain 30 colonies.



Roger Congdon was born into the world of beekeeping in 1939. His father, born in 1900, started with honeybees at 16. A neighbour gave him his first hive and since then, honeybees have been in the Congdon family. In 1957, Roger began his lifelong occupation as a beekeeper in Essex County. He joined the OBA in 1963 and served as President and was granted a Life Membership. Additionally, Roger joined the Canadian Honey Council, serving as President for 4 years and was presented with a Life Membership with them as well. At present, Roger happily continues beekeeping with his son, Tom. Sun Parlor Honey is located in Essex County with an additional location in North Wellington County. It seems he has a 'Life Membership' at Sun Parlor Honey as well!

## **Rochelle Thompson, UoG:**

As a 7th generation farmer and volunteer firefighter in Hamilton, Ontario, Rochelle is naturally passionate about research that works towards strengthening the mental health of farmers and connection within agricultural communities. After completing her Master's of Science in Epidemiology conducting the 2021 National Survey of Farmer Mental Health in Canada, Rochelle is pursuing a PhD at Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, studying the mental health impacts of livestock loss to extreme weather, barn fires, pests, or disease, and ways to better support farmers following these events. She interviewed commercial beekeepers about overwintering losses for this project Spring 2024 and will be discussing preliminary findings of those interviews during this presentation.



## **Rebecca Posthumus & Priyanka Gupta, Agriculture Wellness Ontario**



Rebecca is the Program Coordinator for In the Know with Agriculture Wellness Ontario (AgWO) at the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) – Ontario Division. Rebecca is a University of Guelph grad having her B.A. Sc, Majoring in Child, Youth and Family Development. She also holds her Development Service Worker and Social Service Worker diplomas from Loyalist College. She grew up surrounded by agriculture, her family owns and operates JP Dairy Systems, which services, sells and installs dairy systems and other farm equipment. Rebecca grew up in the 4-H program and is currently a 4-H Volunteer in Hastings County. Rebecca has previously worked in front line human services. She is excited to be able to support the agricultural community utilizing her passion for mental health literacy.

Priyanka Gupta, M.A Counselling, is the Program Outreach Coordinator for the Guardian Network, part of Agriculture Wellness Ontario (AgWO) within the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) - Ontario Division. Priyanka has previously supported individuals with dual diagnosis, experiencing complex mental health and addiction concerns. In addition, Priyanka has also worked as an outreach and prevention specialist for a non-profit organization in Toronto. Priyanka brings with her a broad perspective on the chronic stress farmers face. Her understanding of these issues was formed through her experience with rural and agricultural communities in India. Priyanka is passionate about mental health advocacy and engaging with individuals belonging to diverse cultures and backgrounds.





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## Zac and Amy Kvas, Kvas Fine Beverage Co.:



Zac and Amy Kvas are the Co-Founders of Kvas Fine Beverage Co., a local Niagara food product that incorporates honey into a selection of non-alcoholic cocktail syrups. Originating in 2018, Zac and Amy have continued to find inspiration in local flavour and supporting local agriculture. Their push for simplifying premium cocktails, through the use of flavourful cocktail syrups, has paved the way for both the non-experienced to the high-end mixologist to get creative, allowing anyone the ability to mix up a fabulous drink with flavour, balance and locality.

