2026 Wrap-up Report

Vancouver Island Safety Conference

Built to Last – Stronger Teams, Strengthening Safety

October 17, 2026 | Vancouver Island Conference Centre

Passing the Emcee Torch



For 18 years, Mike Milholm was the familiar voice behind the VISC microphone, guiding attendees through the day with his trademark wit and charm. In 2025, he announced his retirement from the podium, leaving behind some very big shoes to fill.

Fortunately for us, Daniel Jobb, a two-year VISC Steering Committee member from the Employers' Advisers Office, stepped up and took the reins with ease, keeping the day flowing smoothly from start to finish.

We would like to give a big shout-out to Daniel for taking the helm and doing an outstanding job in his first year as emcee. Stepping into a role that Mike held for nearly two decades was no small task, but Daniel rose to the occasion with a natural ability and quickly made the role his own.

Strong Teams Are the Foundation of Safety

In her opening welcome, Cherie Whelan, CEO of the BC Forest Safety Council, touched on the conference theme, *Built to Last: Stronger Teams, Strengthening Safety*, reminding us that safety starts with working together. She spoke about the realities facing forestry today, from economic pressures and workforce challenges to the changing nature of the work itself. While there is no shortage of obstacles, she noted that our resilience and willingness to adapt have long been the foundation of our industry and will continue to move us forward.



She encouraged attendees to use the day to connect with others and share perspectives and ideas so we could learn from one another. She stressed that open conversations and looking out for one another are the heart of safer workplaces and that we all have a role to play in making that happen.

Thank you to everyone who attended the 2026 Vancouver Island Safety Conference. This year's conference featured engaging keynote speakers, informative industry presentations and valuable networking opportunities that focused on advancing safety and strengthening workplaces across BC's forestry sector.

Our sincere thanks to all the volunteers, exhibitors and sponsors whose contributions made this FREE conference possible. Through your financial support, donated products and services, and countless volunteer hours, we were able to deliver another successful event and provide valuable learning and networking opportunities for the 256 attendees.

VISC Twentieth Anniversary

Saturday
October
16

Save the Date

Supporting Our Community

For 19 years, the Vancouver Island Safety Conference has brought forestry workers together to share knowledge and strengthen safety in BC's forestry sector. Beyond the presentations and networking, the conference also provides an opportunity to give back. Through your support, we are able to contribute to three charities each year and help make a meaningful difference in the lives of British Columbians.

SILENT AUCTION: For many years, the silent auction has proudly supported **KidSport Nanaimo** in memory of Fred McEachern. KidSport provides financial assistance to children who might otherwise be unable to participate in organized sports. Thanks to the contributions of our 2026 attendees and donors, this year's silent auction raised $1,626 to help more kids take part in organized sports in the Nanaimo area.

50/50 TICKETS: A total of $990 was raised in our 50/50 draw. Half of the proceeds were donated to the **Canadian Red Cross 2026 BC Wildfires Appeal**, and the other half was won by Adam Walters, who took home $495.

FOOD BANK DONATIONS: Conference attendees continued a longstanding tradition of supporting the **Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank** by donating non-perishable food items and cash in place of registration fees. This year we collected over 200lbs of food and raised $240 in cash donations to help local individuals and families in need.

Prize Winners

Each year, one of the highlights of the conference is the survey prize draw. By simply completing the survey, attendees are entered for a chance to win the grand prize. This year, a BODUM Espresso Machine valued at $700 was up for grabs, courtesy of London Drugs. We want to "espresso" our congratulations to Trevor Coates!



And finally, our Early Bird Registration winner this year was Dan Talbot of Talbot Logging. Dan walked away with a BCFSC Stanfield, toque and socks valued at $150 simply for registering before September 15. Take it from Dan, signing up early really does pay off.



Master of Ceremonies, Daniel Jobb led a Moment of Silence to honour those we lost since the 2025 Vancouver Island Safety Conference. May their memories serve as a reminder of the importance of safety to ensure every worker goes home safe. Every day.

OCCUPATION	AGE	CAUSE OF DEATH
Forestry Worker	65+	Traumatic Injury
Choke Setter	65+	Traumatic Injury
Skidder Operator	45-54	Traumatic Injury
Transport Driver	65+	Motor Vehicle Accident
Deck Officer	45-54	Traumatic Injury
Skidder Operator	55-64	Occupational Disease
Machinist	65+	Occupational Disease
Equipment Operator	25-34	Traumatic Injury
Transport Driver	55-64	Motor Vehicle Accident
Chemical Engineer	65+	Occupational Disease
Pilot	25-34	Motor Vehicle Accident
Forestry Engineer	45-54	Motor Vehicle Accident
Transport Driver	55-64	Motor Vehicle Accident
Forestry Worker	45 - 54	Traumatic Injury



Just weeks before the conference, the forestry community lost a respected leader and friend when Dazy Weymer passed away on September 27.

Dazy will be remembered as a highly respected faller, trainer, mentor and safety advocate whose influence helped shape forestry safety across BC. Throughout his career, he generously shared his knowledge, challenged others to grow and genuinely cared about the people he worked with.

Known for his honesty, wisdom and larger-than-life personality, Dazy touched countless lives both within and beyond the forestry sector. While his passing is deeply felt, his legacy lives on through the people he trained, inspired and supported throughout his remarkable career.

Celebrating Safety Leadership with the 2026 Safety Awards

This year's presentation of the 2026 Leadership in Safety Awards recognized three outstanding individuals who have safety woven into the very fibre of their professional values.

Cherie Whelan, BCFSC's CEO, was honoured to present the Leadership in Safety Awards to these three individuals, having seen first-hand the positive impact each has made on the industry over the course of their careers.

While their achievements span different roles and sectors, each recipient shares a common commitment to protecting workers and raising the standard of safety throughout BC's forestry industry.



2026 Safety Award Winners

Cary White Memorial Lifetime Achievement Award | Mike Milholm, retired WorkSafeBC

Mike devoted more than two decades to advancing safety in BC forestry and earned a reputation as a knowledgeable, practical and respected safety professional. Throughout his career, he helped workers, employers and safety professionals find solutions to improve workplace safety and foster collaboration. Mike's influence reached well beyond his professional work with WorkSafeBC. For 18 years, he was an integral part of the Vancouver Island Safety Conference Steering Committee, supporting conference planning and sharing his expertise with attendees. Through mentorship, relationship building and a genuine commitment to helping others succeed, Mike has made a lasting impact on forestry safety across the province.

Forest Safety MVP Award | Jordan Tesluk

This year Jordan was recognized for his leadership and dedication to safety within the silviculture sector. Having spent years working as a tree planter, Jordan brings firsthand experience and a practical understanding of the challenges tree planters face in the field. He has worked with forestry companies throughout BC and Alberta, helping improve safety programs, support workers and develop solutions that work in real-world conditions. Known for his ability to connect with people and build trust, he has become a valued resource for crews, supervisors and employers alike. Through training, education and worker engagement, Jordan continues to make a positive difference in the lives of silviculture workers.

Manufacturing Safety MVP Award | Scott Wynn – Landsong Heritage Consulting

Scott Wynn has made significant contributions to safety in BC's wood products manufacturing sector throughout his career. Respected for his collaborative approach and commitment to continuous improvement, Scott has built a reputation for bringing people together to share knowledge and strengthen workplace safety.

Through leadership roles with Interfor, Tolko and Landsong Heritage Consulting, as well as his involvement with the Manufacturing Advisory Group, Scott has helped support initiatives that provide practical tools, training and resources to manufacturing operations across the province. His willingness to share expertise, support others and promote learning has had a lasting impact on manufacturing safety in BC.

Nominate a Leader in Safety for 2027

Do you know someone you would like to recognize for safety achievement in forestry? Nominate someone in one of three categories to be honoured at the 2027 Vancouver Island Safety Conference on Saturday, October 16th next year.

Nominations for leaders in forestry safety can be an individual, crew, team, division, contractor, company, supplier, consultant, trainer, etc. - basically anyone that deserves to be recognized for outstanding safety leadership or achievements. Visit the BCFSC website for complete details. Scan the QR Code to access the Leadership in Safety Awards web page.

Powerful Safety Cultures in the Mature Economy

Keynote Presentation by Paul Krismer

Paul Krismer's keynote, Powerful Safety Cultures in the Mature Economy, challenged us to think differently about workplace safety and how positive psychology can help establish continuous improvement.



Keynote Speaker, Paul Krismer

Paul spoke about why organizations with strong safety programs can still struggle with engagement and inconsistent safety performance. He explained that while most companies understand the importance of safe work practices, knowledge alone does not always lead to action. Workplace pressures, habits and attitudes can all influence the choices we make on the job. Building a strong safety culture requires understanding what motivates us and creating an environment where safe behaviours become the norm.

Paul introduced the concept of the "mature economy," where organizations are increasingly dependent on employees who are ready, willing and able to commit to safety not just for themselves but for the entire organization. In this current economic climate, he argued that workplace culture is one of the most important factors in achieving both safety and organizational success. When we feel connected to our work and valued by our organization, we are more likely to take ownership of safety and contribute positively to the workplace.

Throughout the session, Paul spoke about the impact that emotions can have on workplace performance. The research he shared showed us that people who have a positive relationship with their workplace tend to be more productive and engaged in their work. Rather than focusing solely on correcting problems, he said leaders should spend more time recognizing strengths and supporting employees by encouraging the behaviour(s) they want to see repeated.

Paul explained that we pay close attention to what leaders do, not just what they say. When leaders consistently demonstrate that safety is a priority, we are more likely to believe it. Small everyday interactions like listening to people's concerns, not just about workplace concerns, can help build trust and influence the overall workplace culture.

He also encouraged us to consider the role each one of us plays in shaping the culture around us. Every one of us has the ability to influence our peers and support safe choices which in turn contributes to a workplace where people genuinely care about each other's well-being.

Paul left us with a positive and practical message. Strong safety cultures are built by investing in people. We all experience fear, frustration and challenges in our daily lives, but we can choose to focus on the positive and create conditions where we can do our best work. By building positive psychological capital, we can create lasting improvements in safety through the decisions we make and the way we treat each other every day.

Key takeaways from Paul's presentation:

- Strong safety cultures depend on people and their attitudes, not just safety programs and procedures.
- Employees are more likely to work safely when they feel engaged and valued.
- Positive workplace relationships contribute to better performance and stronger safety outcomes.
- Leaders influence culture through their everyday actions and interactions.

"It is scientifically proven that happier people have higher success rates, better relationships, greater career advancement and longer lifespans."
— Paul Krismer, 2026 Vancouver Island Safety Conference

Young Worker Safety: From Orientation to Competency

Keynote Presentation by Darcy Kulai and Dan McMillan

One of the most unforgettable sessions of the conference focused on young worker safety and the lasting impact a workplace incident can have on a person's life.



Keynote Speaker, Darcy Kulai

Darcy Kulai took the stage and shared his experience of being seriously injured while working at a sawmill at just 20 years old. With vulnerability and honesty, he walked us through the events leading up to the incident that changed the course of his life. Late in a Sunday afternoon shift, Darcy was working alone on the green chain when he noticed debris caught in the equipment. As he reached in to remove it, his hand became caught and was pulled into the machinery. With no one nearby to hear his calls for help, Darcy struggled to free himself, causing further injury to his other hand in the process. By the time he was freed, the damage was so severe that his arm ultimately had to be amputated.

Following the surgery, Darcy focused on rebuilding his life and adapting to a future he had never imagined. For a long time, revisiting the details of the incident was difficult and deeply personal. One of the most impactful parts of Darcy's presentation was his honesty about why it took him so many years to speak publicly about the incident and how feelings of self-blame and embarrassment prevented him from talking about it. It wasn't until WorkSafeBC partnered with him to create Finding Strength in Inspiring Others: Darcy's Story that he found a way to turn a devastating workplace incident into an opportunity to educate young and new workers about taking an active role in their own safety.

Like many young workers, Darcy was eager to prove himself and demonstrate his value to his employer. He was hesitant to ask questions because he didn't want to "bother" people who were already busy and he wanted them to see him as capable of handling the job on his own. He also didn't want to risk losing a job that paid so well, especially as a university student who needed the money. His story served as a stark reminder that young workers often enter the workforce without the experience or confidence needed to recognize hazards, speak up when they are uncertain or know what to do when something goes wrong.

Darcy's presenting partner, Dan McMillan, reinforced this message by emphasizing the critical role employers, supervisors and experienced workers play in supporting those who are new to the workforce. He reminded us that organizations must ensure workers receive proper orientation, training and ongoing support as they learn their jobs. Confidence often takes time to develop. Many are entering unfamiliar workplaces, learning new tasks and trying to make a positive impression. In these situations, they may hesitate to ask questions or challenge instructions, even when they are uncertain about the risks. Creating an environment where questions are encouraged and concerns are taken seriously can make all the difference. Experienced workers and supervisors need to take the time to share their knowledge, model safe work practices and help build the confidence needed to make safe decisions.

Rather than allowing the experience to define him, Darcy has found purpose in sharing his story with others, hoping it will help prevent someone else from experiencing a similar tragedy. Darcy encouraged attendees to trust their instincts when something feels unsafe and to ask questions before proceeding with a task they do not fully understand.

Darcy's story left a lasting impression on attendees because it put a human face on the consequences of workplace incidents. His willingness to share his story served as a powerful reminder of why safety matters. The session challenged all of us, whether young workers, supervisors or industry leaders, to support a culture where people feel empowered to ask questions, look out for one another and make safety a priority every day

WorkSafeBC Video

Key takeaways from the session:

- Young workers may not always recognize hazards or feel comfortable speaking up.
- Proper training, orientation and supervision are critical during a worker's early days on the job.
- Foster a culture where questions and concerns are encouraged to help prevent incidents before they happen.
- Experienced workers and supervisor play an important role in supporting those new to their roles.

Emergency Response Planning for BC Forestry

Keynote Presentation by Mike Kay

The final keynote speaker of the day was Mike Kay, who focused on Emergency Response Planning for BC Forestry. With 47 years of experience as an Advanced Care Paramedic and Flight Medic, Mike challenged attendees to think differently about emergency response and consider what happens in the critical minutes immediately following a serious workplace injury.



Keynote Speaker: Mike Kay

He explained that forestry operations often present unique challenges due to remote work locations, difficult access routes and extended emergency response times. Because of these realities, emergency medical planning must go beyond written procedures and ensure workers are prepared to provide effective first aid until advanced medical care arrives. Mike encouraged us to view emergency response plans (ERPs) as living documents that require regular review, practice and refinement.

One of the key messages from the presentation was that emergency response is about far more than simply calling for help. Simple actions taken in the first few minutes, such as controlling severe bleeding, maintaining clear communication with responders and keeping the patient warm, can have a significant impact on survival. Mike stressed that the first call should always be to 911, regardless of location. This ensures emergency medical services (EMS) are mobilized immediately and can help determine the next steps if direct access to the site is not possible. After calling 911, companies should know whether an evacuation helicopter, Search and Rescue or other resources may be required for evacuation.

Citing real-life emergencies from his 47-year career as an Advanced Care Paramedic and Flight Medic, Mike illustrated how delays in communication, confusion about responsibilities and inadequate preparation can have serious consequences. He said that companies that train regularly, conduct realistic emergency response drills and ensure workers understand their roles are better positioned to respond effectively when every second counts.

Mike reminded attendees that emergency medical planning is ultimately about giving injured workers the best possible chance of survival. He also highlighted the importance of having the right equipment available. New products such as Ready-Heat Quick Warming Blankets and Head Tech Vacuum Spine Boards were identified as tools that can help improve patient care while awaiting transport. By investing in planning, training, equipment and regular testing of procedures, employers can improve readiness, support their workers and potentially save lives.

Key takeaways

- Emergency response plans (ERPs) should be regularly reviewed, updated and tested to ensure they remain effective and reflect current worksite conditions.
- Identify the potential barriers that could delay medical care, including access challenges, communication gaps and unclear responsibilities.
- Workers must be prepared to take action during the critical period between an incident occurring and medical responders arriving on scene.
- Reliable communication systems are essential, particularly in remote operations where medical response may be delayed.

Mike Kay's Presentation

Connection to Care

Presenting Speakers Cherie Whelan and Marcy Boyd



BCFSC CEO Cherie Whelan and Marcy Boyd, Director, PR & Advocacy for the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors, gave a presentation on Connection to Care, a free and confidential mental health support phone service available to BC forestry workers.

The session focused on the growing need for mental health support and the importance of ensuring workers have access to help when they need it most.

Cherie opened the presentation by reminding us that while forestry has traditionally focused on managing physical hazards, we also need to recognize the psychological pressures workers face every day. Economic uncertainty, job insecurity and a constant flow of difficult news can create significant emotional stress. She pointed out that workers don't leave those worries behind when they arrive at work and that unmanaged stress can affect attention, decision-making, judgement and fatigue, increasing the potential for incidents.

Cherie was clear that mental health must be considered an essential part of workplace safety, which is why BCFSC introduced the Connection to Care program. She then handed the presentation over to Marcy Boyd from BCACC to explain how the program works.

Marcy provided an overview of the program and explained how it helps remove barriers to accessing mental health support, particularly for workers without extended health benefits or access to an Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). Connection to Care offers BC forestry workers a FREE and confidential way to connect with qualified counsellors and supervised counselling students for therapeutic support. Workers can anonymously call the service Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to discuss anything from everyday stress to more significant personal or workplace concerns and connect with appropriate resources and support.

Cherie closed the session by reminding employers that while they cannot eliminate every source of stress, they can ensure workers know where to find help. She encouraged everyone to share information about the program with their teams so more workers know where to turn when support is needed.

Supporting mental health does not require grand gestures. Simple actions such as checking in with coworkers, having open conversations and letting someone know support is available can make a meaningful difference.

Cherie emphasized that asking for help is not a sign of weakness and that leaders who normalize these conversations help build stronger, safer workplaces where people know they are not facing challenges alone.

Connection to Care

Combustible Dust

Presenting Speaker: Bill Laturnus



Bill Laturnus, Senior Safety Advisor, Manufacturing with the BC Forest Safety Council, provided an in-depth overview of the upcoming combustible dust regulations and the work being undertaken to help industry prepare for their implementation on January 4, 2027.

Bill began by outlining the new regulatory requirements related to Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees, qualified person involvement, combustion risk assessments (CRA) and combustible dust management programs (CDMP). He emphasized that consultation must occur from the outset and involve safety committees in a meaningful and defensible way. He also explained that the role of a qualified person is often best fulfilled by a multidisciplinary team that brings together operational, maintenance, supervisory and worker expertise.

Throughout the presentation, Bill shared several real-world examples highlighting the potentially catastrophic consequences of combustible dust incidents, including the Raleigh sawmill silo explosion. He stressed that while these events occur infrequently, their consequences can be devastating, making prevention and preparedness essential. He also highlighted the training workshops, risk assessment support and practical tools available through the BC Forest Safety Council to help companies navigate the new regulatory requirements. These resources are designed to support organizations in identifying hazards, improving housekeeping practices and strengthening emergency preparedness. He noted that many organizations are finding significant value in the combustion risk assessment process, often gaining a deeper understanding of their equipment, operations and potential hazards while identifying opportunities for improvement.

Bill concluded by encouraging ongoing collaboration and information sharing across the industry. Drawing on the success of initiatives such as the Manufacturing Advisory Group (MAG), he stressed that there must be a willingness from companies to share lessons learned, use the programs available and implement best practices to prevent combustible dust explosions and protect workers.

He reinforced that safety improvements are best achieved when organizations work together, learn from one another and remain committed to continuous improvement.

Combustible Dust Resources

Conference Survey Results

A total of 150 attendees participated in the survey, sharing their feedback on the 2026 VISC Conference. The breakdown of participants revealed that the majority came from the harvesting sector, accounting for 64%. The manufacturing sector represented 28% and 10% of the audience were students.

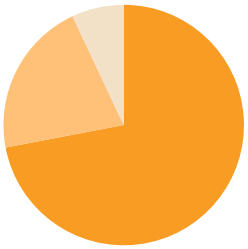
The audience primarily consisted of 37% workers and 28% were managers, with supervisors making up 22%. owners represented 7% of the attendees. 56% of participants were either Worker Safety Representatives or JOHSC Committee members.

95% of the attendees felt the conference was very helpful and a great networking opportunity.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER RATINGS

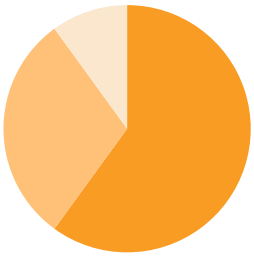
Paul Krismer
Powerful Team Cultures: Winning Hearts and Minds in the Mature Economy

★★★★★ = **72%**
★★★★ = **21%**
★★★ = **7%**



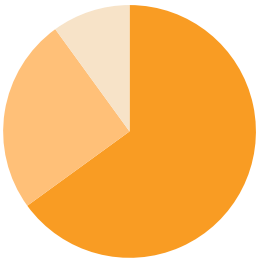
Darcy Kulai and Dan McMillan
Young Worker Safety

★★★★★ = **60%**
★★★★ = **30%**
★★★ = **10%**



Mike Kay
Emergency Response Planning for BC Forestry

★★★★★ = **65%**
★★★★ = **25%**
★★★ = **10%**



2027 SPEAKER TOPIC IDEAS

- Psychological health and safety
- Wildfire management and evacuation
- Coastal emergency response
- Advances in PPE
- How WorkSafeBC views safety
- More stories and hints on young and new workers
- Streamlined safety programs
- Phase integration and work coordination between contractors
- Risk assessment and hazard ID
- Incident shares and safety innovations
- How to avoid complacency and keep forestry worker focused
- The risks of cell phone use while operating heavy equipment
- Driving on forestry roads
- Well-deployed safety programs
- Analysis of a forestry safety audit
- Occupational first aid
- Manufacturing / sawmill / planer mill safety

FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS:

"I loved the speakers this year"

"More audience participation."

"More diverse presentations."

"Earlier end time."

"Keep it going, It was super good."

"Overall, it was great. Keep up the good work"

"Great job, always enjoy this conference."

"Great topics this year."

Vancouver Island Safety Conference

Conference Moments, captured by Geoff Howe, Photographer for VISC 2026

























Vancouver Island Safety Conference

Conference Moments, captured by Geoff Howe, Photographer for VISC 2026







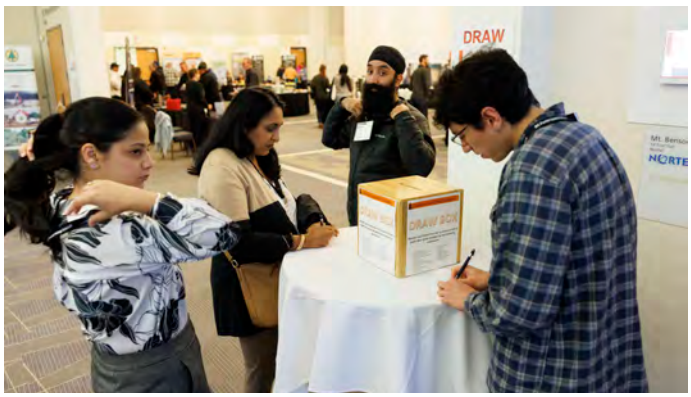




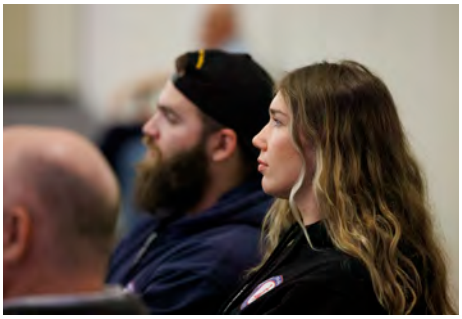














Vancouver Island Safety Conference

BC Forest Safety
Safety is **good** business

WORK SAFE BC

WESTERN Forest Products

MOSAIC FOREST MANAGEMENT

FORBIDDEN TIMBER LTD.

COASTLAND WOOD INDUSTRIES LTD.

UNITED STEELWORKERS USW UNITY AND STRENGTH FOR WORKERS LOCAL 1-1937

HAKA ENTERPRISES LTD.

SPUZZUM CONTRACTING LTD

RAVEN FEATHER CONTRACTING LTD.

CYPRESS CREEK LOGGING

LONDON DRUGS

WAHKASH CONTRACTING LTD

Seaspray LOG SCALING

SAFER Safety Advisory Foundation for Education & Research www.safer.ca

Fall River Logging A MERAKI COMPANY

J.R.L. JORDAN RIVER LOGGING LTD

INTEGRATED OPERATIONS GROUP

KAATZA GROUP

ELCO CONTRACTORS LTD.

Tyli

Thank you to our sponsors for their generosity. Their support allows us to provide free admission for conference attendees.