

Michelle Emson (she/her)

Michelle Emson is an international human rights activist (with a focus on transgender, LGBTQI, and women's rights), a published author, professional speaker, entrepreneur, technologist, and documentary filmmaker.



She is the founder and principal consultant at Sanctuary Studios, Inc., a multi-media, web, and consulting agency, and currently serves as Executive & Technical Director for Theatre Muskoka at the Rene M. Caisse Memorial Theatre in Bracebridge, with a mission to create, present, promote, support, and develop the performing arts in Muskoka.

In 2017, Michelle received a YWCA Muskoka, Women of Distinction Award for her work in the community, and now serves on its Board of Directors.

An openly-out transgender woman, Michelle continues to advocate for 2SLGBTQI and women's rights both locally and internationally. Michelle was previously a founding board member of Dignity Network Canada, and Director of Technology for Women's March Global, the international arm of the Women's March movement.

Working closely with Muskoka Pride, Michelle has worked on numerous projects supporting the queer community in Muskoka, including bringing the Muskoka Queer Film Festival to life as its Technical Director. The festival is now in its seventh season and brings a diversity of domestic and international queer film to audiences across Muskoka, including a specially curated Student Edition.

An award-winning professional speaker and workshop facilitator, Michelle has been sharing her trans journey as a means of increasing awareness, understanding, and acceptance for the transgender lived experience. A journey she shared in part in her contribution to "I Bared My Chest", a book of stories from unstoppable women. She has produced two documentary films, "Pride of Ukraine (2015)" which examines the struggle and achievements of the pride movement in Kyiv, and "Transgender Life in Slovenia (2016)" which explores the lived experiences of ten trans and gender non-conforming individuals from the small central European country.

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