

SPECIAL SERIES



BREAKING GROUND

A Spotlight on Six Women in Canada's Environmental Industry

ERICA GRAY

EVERY CHALLENGE IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GROW

Erica learned and grew from each step with confidence and integrity.



Erica Gray's path into the environmental industry began with a love for nature and a mother who inspired her to pursue higher education. Born and raised in Peterborough, Ontario, she originally planned to become a teacher and was accepted to Nipissing Teachers College. But when she received her acceptance to the University of Waterloo, everything changed.

Career Path

Erica's mother, a single parent, encouraged her to attend university even when money was tight. That unwavering support pushed Erica to become the first person in her family to earn a degree.

At Waterloo, Erica joined the Geography Department and took full advantage of the school's co-op program. Her placements included two government roles and one with XCG Consulting, an environmental consulting company. The government work involved more policy development, permitting, and long-term planning, while XCG offered

variety, fast-paced projects, client-focus and hands-on learning.



After completing her degree, XCG offered her a full-time position. Erica accepted, beginning a 15-year career with the company where she grew personally and professionally. She later worked at BluMetric Environmental for two years and now leads an all-women team at Cambium. With each move, she's stepped into new responsibilities and leadership roles, continually advancing her skills. Her current position

includes senior project management, business development, and marketing, allowing her to combine technical understanding with relationship-building. Most importantly, she found that Cambium's values and culture align closely with her own.

Resilience and Reinvention

Over the years, Erica has learned that progress often comes through challenges. Early in her career, fieldwork meant working on construction sites. It wasn't always easy. Some clients questioned her credibility simply because of her younger-sounding voice. But she learned to push through those barriers, building trust through knowledge, consistency, and professionalism. As more women have entered the field, she's seen attitudes shift toward respect and inclusion.

“Don't be afraid to branch out; don't let yourself get stuck from fear of the unknown.”

On a personal level, Erica has navigated major life changes, including the realities of single motherhood. Balancing her daughters' school schedules, sports, and family time with a demanding career requires patience and adaptability. When setbacks occur, Erica reflects, learns, and moves forward. She believes in taking time to understand why something went wrong before pivoting toward a better solution. Friends describe her as someone who lives in the moment, focuses on what's ahead, and doesn't dwell on the past.

If she could give her younger self one piece of advice, it would be to speak up more. Early in her career, Erica sometimes hesitated to share her thoughts or challenge decisions. A personality assessment once described her as an “inspiring helper” — friendly, realistic, and supportive — and reminded her that if something bothers her, she should address it directly. That message stuck. Today, she emphasizes the importance of trusting your instincts and using your voice, lessons she continues to practice in leadership.

Erica's daughters describes her as confident, a trait Erica now recognizes as one of her greatest strengths. She pairs that confidence with adaptability and empathy, qualities that allow her to navigate change while understanding the people around her. She believes empathy builds stronger teams and leads to better outcomes for clients and colleagues alike.

Leadership, Technical Excellence, and Curiosity

What Erica enjoys most about her work is the variety. No two days are the same. She loves connecting with clients, coworkers, and crews and learning about different industries through the projects she leads. Whether she's collaborating on technical reports, guiding her team, or tackling difficult conversations, Erica approaches every challenge as an opportunity to grow.



While certain tasks, such as writing lengthy reports or managing difficult discussions, can be demanding, she views them as necessary parts of leadership. Her goal is always to approach each situation with honesty, respect, and an open mind.

“Go for it! Believe in yourself. If you are feeling uncomfortable in a situation, consider it an opportunity to grow. Use your voice.”

Erica is passionate about encouraging women to join and advance in the environmental field. Her advice is simple: Go for it. Believe in yourself, and if something feels uncomfortable, see it as a chance to learn. She encourages others to find mentors who can provide perspective and guidance. Mentorship, she says, has been a key part of her own success, and she hopes to support the next generation in the same way.

Evolving Industry Identity

Erica's story reflects the evolution of the environmental industry, which has shifted from traditional technical work to a more people-focused, collaborative approach. Her career has been shaped by confidence, adaptability, and empathy, and by a belief that progress happens when people are willing to learn from challenges and lead with integrity.

From her early days as a co-op student at Waterloo to her current role leading a team of women at Cambium, Erica continues to embody the spirit of growth, resilience, and connection that drives the environmental industry forward. 🌱

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