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**COMMITTEE  
LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE**

## CONFERENCE AGENDA

7:45 to 8:30 a.m.	Registration and continental breakfast	
8:30 to 8:45 a.m.	Opening remarks	South Centennial
8:45 to 9:45 a.m.	Keynote: The human side of unconscious bias <i>Tina Varughese</i>	South Centennial
9:45 to 10:10 a.m.	Nutritional break (refreshments provided)	South Centennial
10:10 to 11:30 a.m.	Workshop sessions A (80 minutes)	
A1	De-escalating potentially violent situations	Centennial 3 and 4
A2	Understanding mental health in the workplace	Wellington A
A3	What to expect from a workplace safety and health inspection	Wellington B
A4	Taking your committee beyond the basics	Embassy A and B
A5	Bridging cultures for safer workplaces: Supporting immigrant workers through cultural awareness	Embassy D and E
A6	Emotional intelligence: Nurturing workplace success through self-awareness and interpersonal skills	Centennial 1
11:30 to 1 p.m.	Lunch (hot meal provided)	South Centennial
1 to 2:20 p.m.	Workshop sessions B (80 minutes)	
B1	Incident reporting and return to work from the worker and employer perspective	Centennial 3 and 4
B2	Spark ideas and fuel results	Wellington A
B3	Vicarious trauma	Wellington B
B4	MSI risk assessment and prevention	Embassy A and B
B5	The multigenerational workplace	Embassy D and E
B6	Respectful workplace and addressing harassment	Centennial 1
2:20 to 2:40 p.m.	Nutritional break (refreshments provided)	South Centennial
2:40 to 3:40 p.m.	Keynote: A healthier you - your future you <i>Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod</i>	South Centennial
3:40 to 4 p.m.	Prizes and wrap-up	South Centennial



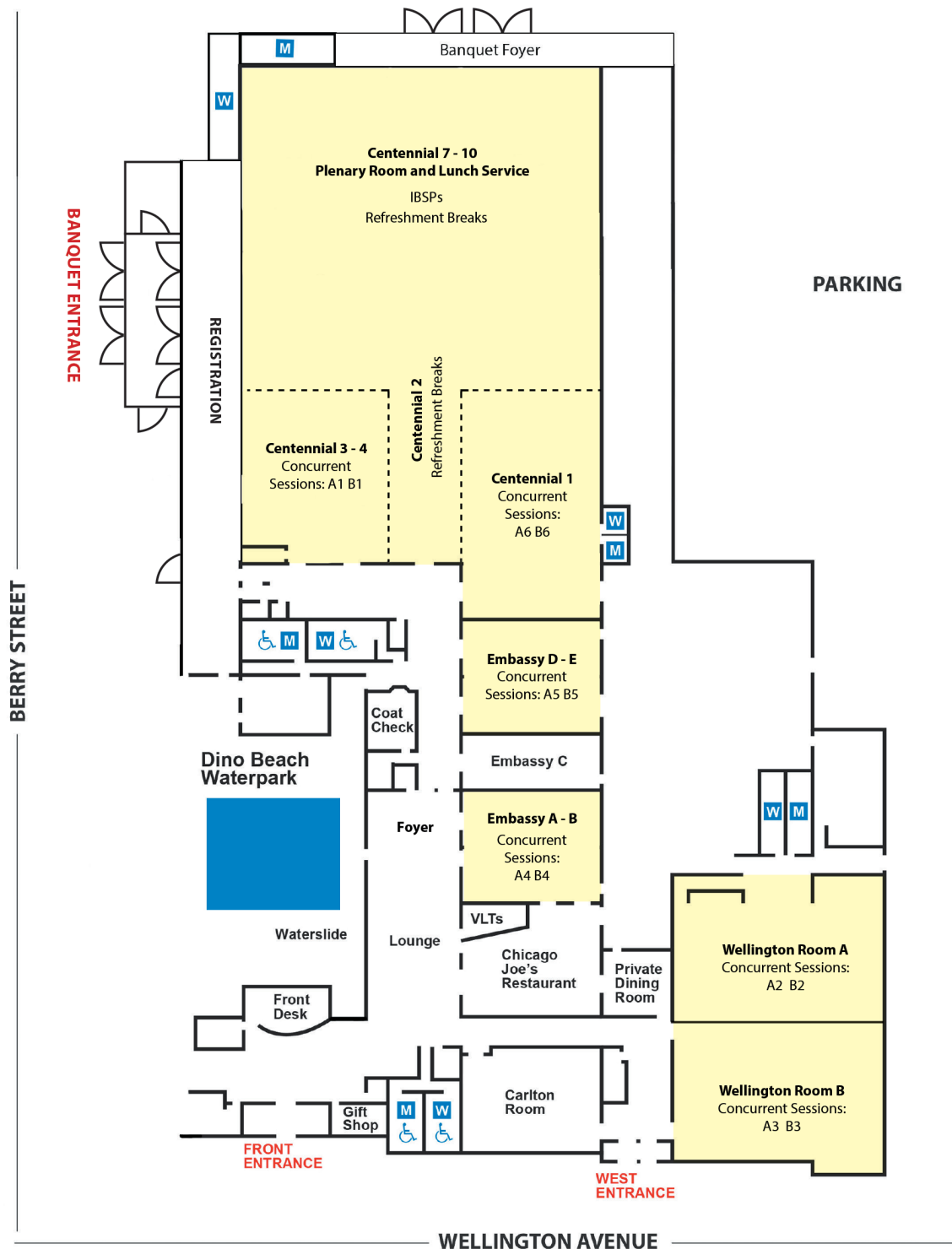
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# COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

November 5, 2025



**VICTORIA INN**  
HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE



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## Welcome to the 11th annual Committee Leadership Conference!

Welcome to the Committee Leadership Conference. This year marks 11 years of bringing safety committee ambassadors from across the province together for one incredible day.

Today's speakers are nothing short of impressive. We're kicking off the day with an inspiring opening keynote from Tina Varughese, human-connection expert and bestselling author. To close off the day, we'll get moving with BodyBreak's Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod and learn how to make healthy changes in our personal and professional lives.

In addition to our exceptional keynote speakers, our conference features a variety of workshops on topics like understanding mental health, safety and health inspections and cultural awareness. I'm confident you'll leave feeling engaged, inspired and equipped with new tools to take back to your workplace safety and health committees.

Thank you to all of the workshop presenters for taking the time to share their valuable knowledge with us today. I'd also like to thank everyone in attendance for your commitment to safety and health in your workplaces. Committees play a fundamental role, and it's through collaborative events like this that we can grow stronger and enhance our workplace safety and health efforts across the province.



Read on for all of the details about the conference. **I look forward to enjoying a fantastic day with you.**

”

**Dave Kramer**

Vice President, SAFE Work Manitoba  
Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba





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# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



## Tina Varughese

### Opening keynote: The human side of unconscious bias

First impressions, positive or negative, are made in seven seconds or less. We all make quick assessments of others without even realizing it. We are not born with bias. Biases are formed by past situations, experiences, background and culture. Unconscious biases typically exist towards gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability (both physical and mental) and weight. Most of us will say “I see people for who they are” but do we? Unconscious biases

affect and impact decision making both professionally and personally with real impact. Recognizing, managing and mitigating unconscious bias promotes diversity and inclusion. Diversity and inclusion drives innovation, increases productivity and stimulates creativity while promoting a healthy, happy, engaging workplace culture.

#### Tina Varughese

Tina is the author of the bestseller, *50 Shades of Beige: Building Bridges While Breaking Bias*. Her work has been featured in the *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, *CBC Eyeopener* and *HR Reporter*. Recognized by *Ignite Magazine* as a Top Ten Notable Speaker, her clients include Pfizer, Carnival Cruises, Hockey Canada, Kraft-Heinz, 3M and the Million Dollar Roundtable. She has also served on McMaster University’s Future of Canada Council and as the past president of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (Alberta).

# KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



## Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod

### **Closing keynote:** **A healthier you - your future you**

Hal and Joanne inspire and motivate others to achieve their healthy, active lifestyle goals. They share their wealth of personal experiences, fitness and wellness knowledge and entrepreneurial business attitude in an energetic and positive manner. Hal and Joanne provide simple strategies to live a healthier lifestyle from their best-selling book. They explore the

concepts of the 20lb effect, one body for life and the future you. Attendees also learn that in order to make healthy changes in their personal and/or business life, they need to identify the triggers that set poor habits in motion and how to establish new triggers, routines and rewards that will change their habits and change their life. Hal and Joanne believe that when an individual is connected to their future self, they are more likely to take charge and practice healthy habits now before it's too late.

#### **Hal Johnson and Joanne McLeod**

Hal and Joanne bring their passionate and energetic approach to healthy living to all their presentations. Attendees instantly connect with Hal and Joanne, as many have grown up seeing them on TV. They come away with the inspiration, motivation and means to take immediate steps for positive change in their health and attitude. In turn, this can help them be successful in their personal lives and careers.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A1: De-escalating potentially violent situations**

It is important for those who work in an environment where there is potential for violence to develop the skills needed to defuse dangerous situations. Participants will develop an understanding of how to assess the potential for violence and respond with a diverse set of interpersonal tools and strategies.

**Andrew Wychnenka, ACHIEVE Centre for Leadership**

Andrew is a conflict management professional with over a decade of experience delivering conflict management services such as mediation, coaching and training in various sectors. He is passionate about helping people understand conflict and find solutions to problems that seem insurmountable on their own.

He has a bachelor's degree in conflict resolution studies and psychology and holds a chartered mediator designation through the Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Canada. He has conducted over 100 mediation processes in court, family, workplace and community settings and has over 18 years of service as a leader in the Canadian military, which includes a deployment to Afghanistan. He also spent five years as a conflict management expert for a government department where he offered internal mediation services, training and group processes.

Andrew believes that having a mindset that focuses on seeking understanding is the key to resolving conflict. As a facilitator, he is passionate about making the content of a workshop relatable through practical examples and dialogue among participants.



# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A2: Understanding mental health in the workplace**

Learn about the importance of mental health at work and strategies for creating psychologically healthy workplaces. This session includes an overview of mental illness, tips for identifying employees who may be struggling and how to start a conversation about mental health to support employees.

### **Orianne Donig-Harder, CMHA Manitoba and Winnipeg**

Orianne Donig-Harder is senior manager of employment and workplace solutions at the Canadian Mental Health Association Manitoba and Winnipeg. She provides outreach, education and workplace consultation to employers in Manitoba to develop plans to improve the mental health of their organizations and employees. Orianne manages the teams that make up the CMHA employment continuum: Wellness Skills Supports, which provides support to adult learners who are completing their education and Employment with Supports, a rapid employment program for motivated job seekers.

Orianne has worked in mental health and supported employment since 2014 and is passionate about the role that employment plays in recovery. Orianne's goal is to promote psychologically healthy workplaces that include diversity and accessibility for everyone.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A3: What to expect from a workplace safety and health inspection**

This presentation is intended for workers who may be required to accompany a safety and health officer during a workplace inspection.

As a worker you may need to:

- Conduct a general inspection.
- Receive a workplace safety complaint or tip from the public.
- Respond to questions and inquiries from the public.
- Make decisions regarding a workplace hazard.
- Investigate a workplace incident and/or injury.
- Handle a situation where a worker refuses unsafe work.
- Investigate a reprisal complaint (formerly known as discriminatory action).
- Respond to inactive or dysfunctional safety and health committees.

### **Darren James, Workplace Safety and Health**

Darren James is a regional manager for the inspection services unit and has been with Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health for 15 years. He has worked in both prevention and inspection services capacities at WSH and has performed inspections and investigations in a variety of workplace sectors. Prior to joining WSH, Darren spent 19 years at a large Winnipeg-based urban bus manufacturer as a stockkeeper and worker co-chairperson of the joint safety and health committee.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A4: Taking your committee beyond the basics**

Whether you are a new or experienced committee member, this presentation will expand your knowledge from getting to know the basics about safety and health committees, to finding ways to strengthen and engage your committee members.

In this workshop, participants will learn:

- Procedures and practices required for a functioning safety and health committee.
- Practical tips to strengthen the committee and ways to engage committee members.
- Understand a committee's importance in the elements of a safety and health program.

### **Jeff Shaw, SAFE Work Manitoba, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba**

Jeff Shaw has a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture from the University of Manitoba and currently holds a Certified Health and Safety Consultant designation through the Canadian Society of Safety Engineers. Before joining SAFE Work Manitoba a division of the WCB, as a prevention consultant, Jeff worked at the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Branch as a provincial farm safety coordinator. Prior to that, he worked for several years in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

His current duties as a prevention consultant with SAFE Work Manitoba include providing support to workplaces through consulting and training. He actively works with safety and health committees across Manitoba by performing workplace safety and health committee assessments, as well as facilitating workshops. He thoroughly enjoys working with safety and health committees, finding ways to strengthen committees and engage members, which in turn, enhances the overall safety and health program and results in fewer workplace injuries and illnesses.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A5: Bridging cultures for safer workplaces: Supporting immigrant workers through cultural awareness**

In an increasingly diverse Manitoba workforce, cultural awareness is essential to creating truly safe and inclusive workplaces. This session explores how cultural norms, communication styles, and differing perceptions of authority and safety can shape workplace interactions, particularly for immigrant workers. While the main focus will be on Slavic newcomers, the lessons apply broadly across cultures. Drawing from real-life scenarios and practical tools, participants will deepen their understanding of how multicultural dynamics affect workplace safety and health and what committees can do to support respectful, effective collaboration.

**Daria M. Pakhomova, Simaril Inc.**

Daria is a seasoned human resources and operations professional with a strong background in training, leadership and organizational development—both internationally and here in Canada. Having immigrated to Canada nearly a decade ago, she brings a personal and practical understanding of the challenges newcomers face when adapting to a new culture and workplace. Daria holds a Bachelor of Arts from her home country and a post-graduate diploma in human resource management from the University of Winnipeg, PACE. In her current role as human resource director at Simaril, she leads diverse teams and drives initiatives that prioritize safety, inclusion and meaningful employee engagement.

Outside of her leadership role, Daria shares her knowledge as a part-time instructor at the University of Winnipeg. She is passionate about building culturally aware workplaces and regularly speaks on topics related to immigration, diversity and psychological safety. Drawing from both her professional expertise and personal journey, Daria offers thoughtful insight into how cultural understanding can improve collaboration, communication and long-term success for newcomers—especially in a province like Manitoba that welcomes a growing number of immigrants each year.



# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**10:10 to 11:30 a.m.**

## **A6: Emotional intelligence: Nurturing workplace success through self-awareness and interpersonal skills**

Discover the essential skills that empower individuals to navigate the complexities of the professional world with grace and effectiveness. Emotional intelligence is not just an important factor but the cornerstone of personal and professional success, influencing how we perceive and manage emotions, both our own and those of others.

This workshop is designed for professionals committed to enhancing their emotional intelligence for personal growth and professional advancement. Join us on this journey of self-discovery and skill refinement to unlock the full potential of your emotional intelligence and thrive in both your personal and professional spheres.

### **Jocelyne Lavich, Manitoba Blue Cross**

Since 2000, Jocelyne has worked in mental health and related fields, both in clinical and community settings. She has been a counsellor and presenter through Manitoba Blue Cross's employee assistance program since 2021 and currently serves as a part-time nurse educator at Red River College Polytech. Jocelyne brings extensive experience in supporting adult individuals and couples, particularly those experiencing anxiety and mental health concerns. She is skilled in providing a trauma-informed care approach and diversity-affirmative care.

Jocelyne holds a Baccalaureate of Nursing degree from the University of Manitoba and a Master of Marriage and Family Therapy from the University of Winnipeg.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B1: Incident reporting and return to work from the worker and employer perspective**

This presentation focuses on the critical roles of both workers and employers in reporting workplace injuries to the WCB. It offers practical guidance for employers on how to effectively support injured workers, emphasizing the importance of clear communication, early planning and a structured return to work process. The presentation also highlights the mutual benefits of a timely and well-supported return to work for both the worker and the employer.

### **Jennifer Willems, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba**

Jennifer Willems is a return to work program specialist with the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba (WCB). Jennifer has worked for the WCB for 19 years in a number of roles such as adjudicator in the short term claims department and return to work consultant. Prior to joining the WCB, Jennifer worked for a large manufacturing company in human resources and ability management roles.

Jennifer is passionate about her role as a return to work program specialist, where she is able to help employers better understand the WCB and learn how to develop effective return to work programs to minimize the impact of workplace injuries to both workers and employers.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B2: Spark ideas and fuel results**

Some days, coming up with new ideas feels impossible. You sit in a meeting, hoping inspiration will strike, but the conversation circles back to the same familiar solutions. Whether you're trying to improve a process or offer a new approach, it's easy to get stuck in routine thinking. This session helps you overcome creative blocks and turn your ideas into results.

Learning objectives:

- Generate creative ideas by brainstorming new ideas and challenging assumptions.
- Use individual and group thinking exercises to explore new solutions.
- Build confidence in your creativity and develop it as a skill.

### **Kristin Garner, Eclectic Communications**

Kristin is a facilitator and instructional designer for Eclectic Communications. She has over two decades of experience in the field of education as a teacher in both the public and private school systems and has specialized in teaching emotional literacy and communication over the past several years. She is a skilled communicator and writer who designs customized sessions to meet the unique needs of each group she works with, ensuring the learning experience is both relevant and meaningful. Kristin is passionate about supporting each individual's learning journey in a safe, supportive and friendly environment, encouraging learning with a playful and engaging approach.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B3: Vicarious trauma**

Have you been feeling hopeless or overwhelmed lately? Do you find yourself feeling physically and emotionally exhausted? Do you sometimes struggle to stay present, experience moments of numbness or look for distractions to “check out”? How do YOU experience and respond to trauma exposure?

This session will look at the impact that bearing witness to trauma has on our mind, body and spirit and highlight strategies to address and protect ourselves. This includes looking at how our own nervous systems and stress responses factor into the way we experience the exposure to trauma at work.

The learning outcomes for this workshop include:

- Defining vicarious trauma.
- Recognizing the warning signs and the contributing factors .
- Introducing protective factors and identifying ways to incorporate stress management and self-care into our personal and professional lives.

### **Nadia La Rosa, Klinic Community Health**

Nadia La Rosa is the coordinator of the Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre at Klinic Community Health in Winnipeg. She has been with Klinic for 30 years, the majority of which were spent working in the sexual assault crisis program. Her background includes delivering direct services to and advocating on behalf of individuals and families affected by sexualized violence and raising awareness to promote effective responses to sexual assault in communities throughout Manitoba.

Nadia facilitates workshops on trauma-sensitive practices and ways of being. She is especially interested in the neurobiology of trauma, the significance of awareness and contemplative practices in recovery and the power of connection in cultivating a more holistic understanding of and approach to healing.



# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B4: MSI risk assessment and prevention**

This workshop will focus on workplaces preventing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) through a MSI risk assessment tool. Learn how MSIs develop, how to assess for risks of MSIs and prioritize implementing controls for MSI hazards. The session will also include a business case for investing in ergonomics.

**Michelle Mialkowski, SAFE Work Manitoba, Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba**

Michelle, MExSc, BESS-AT, CAT(C), CES, holds a Bachelor of Exercise and Sport Science in athletic therapy and a Master's in exercise science. She has been a certified athletic therapist for over 20 years and received her certified ergonomic specialist designation in 2019. Her passion for injury prevention began early while working with competitive and recreational athletes at the local, provincial, national and collegiate levels. In 2016, she started working as an injury prevention specialist in healthcare, training healthcare workers on protecting themselves from injuries and providing ergonomic consults for injury prevention. Since 2022, she has been a prevention consultant with SAFE Work Manitoba, the WCB division dedicated to preventing workplace injury and illness.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B5: The multigenerational workplace**

Never before have grandparents worked with others who are the same age as their own grandchildren. Baby Boomers, Gen-X, Millennials and now Gen-Z are all working together in collaborative practice environments. But what does that mean for those of us who work with colleagues from different generations? Do we need to adapt our own values and views? Do we need to adapt our communication techniques as a result of differences in generations?

This session will provide an overview of the multigenerational workplace and describe generational communication techniques to help participants reduce stress between generations. It will also cover the impact of social media and workplace technology and how to adapt our own approach to those we work with in our respective workplaces.

### **Carmel Watson, Manitoba Blue Cross**

Since 2000, Carmel has worked in mental health and related fields. She has extensive experience providing individual, group and family therapy, crisis intervention and critical incident stress management. Carmel is also a well-established presenter of mental health and well-being topics and is skilled at consulting with senior leaders to develop solutions to support the wellness goals of many organizations.

She holds a Master of Marriage and Family Therapy degree from the University of Winnipeg and is a member of the Canadian Association of Marriage and Family Therapy.

### **Jody Martens, Manitoba Blue Cross**

Jody is the workplace well-being coordinator at Manitoba Blue Cross and holds a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Manitoba. Jody is a queer, nonbinary and neurodivergent practitioner born and raised on Treaty 1 Territory. Since 2007, they have worked in the community non-profit field, specializing in program development, workshop facilitation, research/policy work, harm reduction and critical incident response support. Jody is enthusiastic about supporting work with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and their practice centers around anti-oppressive, anti-colonial and trauma-informed frameworks.

# WORKSHOP SESSIONS

**1 to 2:20 p.m.**

## **B6: Respectful workplaces and addressing harassment**

A respectful workplace is a prerequisite for building a healthy and successful organization. Respectful workplaces not only foster productivity, they also contribute to employee wellbeing. This workshop explores the components of respect and addresses individual responsibilities within the work environment. Participants will learn how to voice their expectations as well as initiate and respond to difficult conversations about disrespectful behaviour. This training will help provide the attitudes and skills necessary to contribute to creating and sustaining a respectful work environment.

### **Paul Carrick, ACHIEVE Centre for Leadership**

Paul has been providing conflict resolution and counselling services for over 25 years. He is a registered social worker who holds a master's degree in clinical social work and a diploma in human resource management. Paul currently works for Achieve Centre for Leadership, Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute and has a private practice as a conflict resolution specialist and mental health therapist. His areas of expertise are conflict resolution, domestic abuse, trauma, among others.

He has in-depth experience supporting individuals, organizations and communities experiencing unhealthy work environments including; bullying, harassment, trauma and mental health concerns. Paul believes the key to facilitating critical conversations is to do so in a nonthreatening manner so that individuals and organizations feel heard and supported. As a trainer, he delivers practical, applicable information in an approachable, humorous and engaging presentation style.



## Committee Leadership Conference Evaluation form

Before the final keynote (2:40 p.m.), submit this completed form to the registration table for a chance to win a home security bundle! Must be present to win.

Thank you for attending our event. Please provide feedback on the following:

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Overall value of the conference	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Variety of workshop topics	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Venue: overall impression	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keynote speaker: Tina Varughese	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Additional comments:

Help us plan for 2026:

What topics would you like to see addressed?

Are there any speakers you would like to hear?

**Thank you for your feedback!**  
**Your input will be considered for next year's conference.**



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## NOTES

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Watch for details about the 2026  
Committee Leadership Conference at [wcb.mb.ca/safeworkmanitoba](https://wcb.mb.ca/safeworkmanitoba)