



**SAFE  
WORK**  
MANITOBA™  
A division of the WCB

**COMMITTEE  
LEADERSHIP  
CONFERENCE**

**November 5, 2025**

**Victoria Inn Hotel & Convention Centre, Winnipeg**

## **Session descriptions**

### **Morning sessions (choose one)**

#### **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. This session is designed to teach people to de-escalate potentially violent situations through assertiveness and interpersonal communication. Participants will develop a clear understanding of how to assess the potential for violence and respond with a diverse set of interpersonal tools and strategies designed to defuse potentially violent situations.

#### **Session speaker: 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.

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## 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.

### **Session speaker:** 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.

## 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 decision(s) 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

### **Session speaker:** Darren James, Workplace Safety & Health

Darren James is a regional manager for the inspection services unit and has been with Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) 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

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workplace sectors. Prior to joining WSH, Darren spent 19 years at a large Winnipeg-based urban bus manufacturer as a stock keeper and worker co-chairperson of the Joint Safety and Health Committee.

#### **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 you 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
- a committee's importance in the elements of a safety and health program

#### **Session speaker: Jeff Shaw, SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the WCB**

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 the Workers Compensation Board's SAFE Work Manitoba 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 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.

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## **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.

### **Session speaker: 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.

## **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. It influences 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.

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**Session speaker: 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 RRC 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.

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## Afternoon sessions (choose one)

### **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.

#### **Session speaker: Jennifer Willems, Workers Compensation Board**

Jennifer Willems is a return to work program specialist with the 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.

### **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 include:

- 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

#### **Session speaker: Susan Portelance, Eclectic Communications**

Susan is a facilitator for Eclectic Communications. After many years in the corporate world, Susan has turned her love of language into a career as a writer, editor and trainer. As an editor, Susan works with her clients to craft effective communications, from newsletters and blogs to eBooks

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and proposals. Susan brings to the classroom over 20 years of training experience and four years of Toastmasters participation, where she has honed her public speaking and leadership skills. Susan joined Eclectic in January 2013 and has quickly proven to be an exceptional facilitator.

### **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

### **Session speaker: Nadia La Rosa, Klinik Community Health**

Nadia La Rosa is the coordinator of the Manitoba Trauma Information and Education Centre at Klinik Community Health in Winnipeg. She has been with Klinik 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.

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

This workshop will focus on preventing musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) by using a risk assessment tool. Learn how MSIs develop, how to assess risks and how to prioritize implementing hazard controls. Included will be a business case for investing in ergonomics.

### **Session speaker: Michelle Mialkowski, SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the WCB**

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.

## **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 speak on how to adapt our own approach to those we work with in our respective workplaces.

### **Session speaker: 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 her practice centers around anti-oppressive, anti-colonial and trauma-informed frameworks.



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## **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 contribute to employee well-being. 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.

### **Session speaker: 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 resources. Paul currently works for the University of Winnipeg as a complaints resolution advisor and has a small private counselling practice.

He has in-depth experience supporting individuals, organizations and communities experiencing unhealthy work environments, bullying, 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.