

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Wednesday, October 28, 2026

**COMMITTEE
LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE**

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| 7:45 to 8:30 AM | Registration and continental breakfast | |
| 8:30 to 8:45 AM | Opening remarks | South Centennial |
| 8:45 to 9:45 AM | Microaggressions and their impact on mental health—Anthony McLean | South Centennial |
| 9:45 to 10:10 AM | Break (refreshments included) | South Centennial |
| 10:10 to 11:30 AM | Morning sessions A (80 minutes) | |
| A1: | Seven principles of return to work for psychological injuries | Centennial 1 |
| A2: | Navigating musculoskeletal wellness and mobility in the modern workplace | Centennial 3 |
| A3: | Taking your committee beyond the basics | Embassy A and B |
| A4: | What to expect from a workplace safety and health officer | Embassy D and E |
| A5: | Preventing harassment and violence in the workplace | Wellington A |
| A6: | Clear, calm, connected: Strengthening everyday communication at work | Wellington B |
| 11:30 AM to 1 PM | Lunch (hot meal included) and stretch with Tim Nanassy | South Centennial |
| 1 to 2:20 PM | Afternoon sessions B (80 minutes) | |
| B1: | Diversity in the workplace | Centennial 1 |
| B2: | The new multi-generational workplace: How strong leaders are adapting to changing expectations | Centennial 3 |
| B3: | Inspections and investigations | Embassy A and B |
| B4: | Hazard identification and risk control for psychological health and safety | Embassy D and E |
| B5: | Conflict resolution and stress management: Building healthier conversations in the workplace | Wellington A |
| B6: | Supportive communication for psychological injuries | Wellington B |
| 2:20 to 2:40 PM | Break (refreshments included) | South Centennial |
| 2:40 to 3:40 PM | Emotional intelligence and resiliency in changing times—Carolyn Stern | South Centennial |
| 3:40 to 4 PM | Prizes and wrap-up | South Centennial |

AGENDA SUBJECT TO CHANGE

CLC SESSIONS

Morning sessions: 10:10 to 11:30 AM

A1 - Seven principles of return to work for psychological injuries

Discover how to transform your organization's approach to psychological injuries. This session reveals how the seven principles of return to work, identified by the Institute for Work & Health, can be put into action to create safer, more supportive workplaces and improve outcomes for psychological injuries.

Learning outcomes:

- Identify the seven principles of return to work to support workers through their psychological injury.
- Determine the psychological impact of effectively and ineffectively utilizing these principles.
- Assess gaps within your workplace in the application of the principles.
- Develop strategies to incorporate the seven principles into your existing return to work program and planning.

Jennifer Willems – Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Jennifer Willems is a Return to Work Program Specialist with the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba (WCB), bringing 20 years of combined WCB experience in adjudication and return to work. Prior to joining the WCB, she worked in human resources and ability management within the manufacturing and retail sectors. Jennifer is passionate about helping employers better understand the WCB's processes and develop effective return to work programs to reduce the impact of workplace injuries on both workers and employers.

A2 - Navigating musculoskeletal wellness and mobility in the modern workplace

This session focuses on preventing pain and improving long-term physical health through simple, consistent habits. It highlights five key health pillars while challenging the idea that physical decline is inevitable with age. A major theme is that modern lifestyles, especially prolonged sitting and poor modern footwear, contribute to dysfunction and back pain. The seminar encourages treating the body like an athlete through regular movement, mobility work and strength exercises, emphasizing that most musculoskeletal issues are preventable with simple, daily actions.

Tim Nanassy - Sport and Spine Physical Therapy Centre

Tim Nanassy is a highly experienced physiotherapist with over 21 years in orthopedic private practice and workplace health. As a University of Manitoba graduate, he continues to work with Team Canada Wrestling, supporting Olympians and elite athletes across multiple sports. He has delivered hands-on care, seminars, speeches, courses and corporate workshops in over 30 countries worldwide for corporations, small businesses and government organizations. As a clinic owner and health and safety consultant, he specializes in ergonomic assessments, functional capacity evaluations and injury risk reduction—empowering individuals and organizations to reach peak performance and optimal well-being.

A3 - 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.
- The importance of committees in the elements of the safety and health program.

Jeff Shaw – SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the 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 as a Prevention Consultant, Jeff worked at 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 those ways to strengthen the committee, engage members, which in turn, will enhance the overall safety and health program, resulting in fewer workplace injuries and illnesses.

A4 - 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.

Darren James - Workplace Safety and Health

Darren James is a Regional Manager for the Inspection Services Unit and has been with the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) for 16 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 stock keeper, worker and co-chairperson of the joint safety and health committee.

A5 - Preventing harassment and violence in the workplace

Harassment and violence continue to impact workplaces across Manitoba, regardless of industry or sector. Creating and maintaining a respectful, safe work environment is both a legal requirement and a shared responsibility. This session provides a high-level overview of workplace harassment and violence, including key legislative requirements, common definitions and practical approaches to prevention and response. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of their roles in fostering a respectful workplace and addressing concerns appropriately when they arise.

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify key requirements under applicable Manitoba legislation.
- Define workplace harassment and violence and recognize common examples.
- Describe employer and worker responsibilities in preventing harassment and violence.
- Outline appropriate steps for responding to and reporting incidents.
- Recognize practical strategies to support a respectful and safe workplace culture.

Shawn Trudell – SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Shawn Trudell is a Prevention Consultant with SAFE Work Manitoba, WCB's prevention division, where he supports employers, safety committees and workers by providing training, custom presentations, inspections and safety and health program assessments. Shawn is a certified health and safety consultant, certified disability management professional, national construction safety officer and certified ergonomic specialist, with over 20 years of experience in disability management. Shawn has worked extensively with employers and workers and understands the significant impact workplace injuries resulting from hazards can have.

A6 – Clear, calm, connected: Strengthening everyday communication at work

Everyday communication plays a powerful role in shaping our workplace relationships, team collaboration and the experience of those we serve. This interactive workshop equips participants with practical communication strategies that enhance clarity, empathy and effectiveness in interactions with clients, coworkers and other professionals.

Drawing on therapeutic communication techniques, the session will focus on skills such as active listening, empathetic responding, non-verbal awareness and assertive speaking. Participants will explore how to use communication to de-escalate distress and express themselves confidently and respectfully in the workplace.

Learning outcomes:

- Explore active listening techniques to improve understanding and connection in workplace conversations.
- Use empathetic communication techniques to respond respectfully and supportively to others.
- Recognize how non-verbal communication affects interactions with clients, coworkers and professionals.
- Communicate confidently and assertively while maintaining professionalism and respect.

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 as well as crisis intervention and critical incident stress management. Carmel is also a well-established presenter on mental health and well-being topics and is skilled at consulting with senior leaders to develop solutions that 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.

Afternoon sessions: 1 to 2:20 PM

B1 – Diversity in the workplace

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies are becoming commonplace in the workplace. They strive to cultivate workplaces where employees are treated fairly and respectfully, regardless of an individual's age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and ability. This session aims to move beyond diversity as a buzzword and meaningfully explore the value a truly diverse and inclusive organization can offer employees.

Participants will learn:

- Concepts related to EDI.
- Barriers to achieving EDI.
- Strategies to promote EDI in the workplace.

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. They enjoy playing board games, watching local drag shows and trying new restaurants.

B2 - The new multi-generational workplace: How strong leaders are adapting to changing expectations

For the first time in history, four generations are working side by side, each shaped by different experiences, expectations and ways of communicating. For leaders, this can create real tension in everyday interactions with their teams. In this session, you'll gain a clearer understanding of what's driving those dynamics and where friction tends to show up. More importantly, you'll see how strong leaders are adapting their leadership approach without compromising accountability or getting pulled into stereotypes. You will leave with a clearer perspective on generational dynamics and begin to see your own teams with greater curiosity, understanding and clarity.

- Identify where generational tension most commonly shows up on teams.
- Shift from assumptions to curiosity when navigating generational differences.
- Strengthen communication and feedback approaches across generations.
- Reflect on how generational dynamics may be influencing your own team.

Robyn Penner Thiessen - Robyn Penner Thiessen Consulting

Robyn Penner Thiessen is a leadership coach and DEIA consultant who helps leaders navigate complex people dynamics and build strong, inclusive teams. With over 20 years of experience in international and domestic contexts, she supports teams in communicating across differences and building trust and accountability. She holds a master's degree focused on interreligious dialogue, informing her understanding of power, identity and systemic inequities. Through her work across public, nonprofit and corporate sectors, she helps leaders better understand the people they lead and use those differences as a strength rather than a source of stress.

B3 - Inspections and investigations

This session is designed to give committee members, supervisors and workers a clear understanding of workplace inspections and incident investigations. Participants will explore the fundamentals of workplace inspections, including their purpose, who is responsible for conducting them, applicable legislative requirements, the various types and approaches and what to look for when completing an inspection. The session also covers workplace investigations—why they are conducted, the relevant legislative requirements and the key principles that guide an effective investigation. Participants will be introduced to a practical seven-step investigation process to help them confidently apply these skills within their own workplace.

Learning objectives:

- Understand the purpose and importance of workplace inspections and investigations in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment.
- Identify legislative requirements and responsibilities related to inspections and investigations for committee members, supervisors and workers.
- Differentiate between types of workplace inspections and approaches and recognize what to look for when conducting them.
- Explain the purpose and key principles of workplace investigations, including when and why they are conducted.
- Apply a structured seven-step investigation process to confidently conduct basic workplace investigations.

Thomas Miller – SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Thomas Miller holds the National Construction Safety Officer (NCSO), Certified Registered Safety Professional (CRSP) and Certified Health and Safety Consultant (CHSC) designations. With a background in the construction and manufacturing sectors, he has worked with a wide range of industries, employers and workers, providing safety education and consulting services. Through his experience, he understands the questions that safety and health committees—and their members—often have when navigating their roles, particularly in relation to workplace inspections and investigations. He is currently a Prevention Consultant for the WCB's SAFE Work Manitoba division.

B4 - Hazard identification and risk control for psychological health and safety

Psychosocial hazards are workplace factors that can cause psychological or physical harm to workers. Identifying and addressing psychosocial hazards is necessary to protect a worker's well-being, enhance workplace productivity and meet occupational legal requirements.

This session will discuss the WCB's psychosocial risk assessment tool and how the employer, in collaboration with the committee, can assess risks in their workplace. The session will also touch on how hazard controls are necessary to protect a worker's psychological and physical well-being, enhance workplace productivity and meet emerging occupational legal requirements.

Learning objectives:

- The importance of hazard identification and risk control for psychological safety.
- Workplace safety and health legislation.
- Psychosocial hazard identification.
- Assessing the risks from psychosocial hazards.
- Controlling identified psychosocial hazards.

Michelle Mialkowski – SAFE Work Manitoba, a division of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Michelle 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 25 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 for the WCB's SAFE Work Manitoba division.

B5 - Conflict resolution and stress management: Building healthier conversations in the workplace

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable, but how we respond to it determines whether it becomes destructive or transformative. This engaging and thought-provoking session equips participants with practical tools to address conflict early, manage stress effectively and foster a respectful and psychologically safe workplace. Drawing from real-life experiences, research and proven strategies, this workshop empowers individuals and leaders to shift from avoidance and reactivity to confidence, communication and clarity.

Participants will:

- Understand and recognize their comfort level with conflict, the root causes of workplace conflict and why it is often avoided.
- Recognize the connection between unresolved conflict and stress, burnout and workplace culture.
- Learn practical conflict resolution strategies that can be applied immediately.
- Explore how personal experiences and communication styles influence conflict responses.
- Develop stress management tools to maintain emotional balance and resilience.
- Gain confidence in speaking up respectfully and setting healthy boundaries.

Sherry Benson-Podolchuk - Star Agassi Consulting

Sherry Benson-Podolchuk is a retired RCMP officer with 20 years of service and a recognized expert in workplace bullying, conflict resolution and trauma-informed leadership. She is the founder of Star Agassi Consulting and has delivered presentations across Canada and internationally, including at government organizations, conferences and universities. Sherry brings lived experience, professional training and a compassionate, practical approach to creating safer, healthier workplaces.

B6 - Supportive communication for psychological injuries

Learn how to guide supportive return to work planning conversations that focus on abilities, flexible work options, collaboration and clear next steps. Using what is called the SUPPORT approach and the layers of effective communication, participants will build practical skills in empathy, active listening and respectful dialogue—shaped by tone, body language and open-ended questions while maintaining trust, privacy and psychological safety throughout the process.

Learning outcomes:

- Develop supportive communication strategies when working with injured workers.
- Apply the layers of effective communication during initial and ongoing conversations with injured workers.
- Use the SUPPORT approach to guide difficult conversations related to accommodation and return to work planning.

Kelly Birrell – Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Kelly Birrell is a Return to Work Consultant with the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba who brings over 30 years of experience supporting injured workers and employers with workplace injuries. In her current role, Kelly delivers interactive employer training grounded in adult learning principles, focusing on the WCB's processes and return to work best practices. She also provides comprehensive consultations to organizations aimed at developing or enhancing their return to work program. Kelly combines her technical expertise with strong communication skills, helping employers navigate complex return to work situations and approach difficult conversations with empathy, collaboration and flexibility.

Angela Whitney – Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

Angela Whitney is a Return to Work Consultant with the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba. With over 20 years of experience working in vocational rehabilitation and return to work consulting across the private sector and the WCB, she has dedicated her career to supporting employers and workers in achieving safe and suitable return to work outcomes.

She works closely with employers to develop effective return to work programs and guide supportive conversations. She promotes empathy and respectful dialogue, with a focus on seeing each worker as a person first to build trust and support positive return to work experiences.