

Better Workplace Conference

April 22–23, 2026 | Virtual



Agenda

Day 1 / April 22, 2026 The Reset

11:00 a.m. [Opening Remarks](#)

Welcome to the Better Workplace Conference: Opening Remarks

Speaker:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital,
Signal49 Research

Join us as we open the conference with a holistic understanding of wellness—one that recognizes the interconnected roles of mental and emotional wellbeing, financial health, social connection, community, and work–life balance. We'll acknowledge how inclusion and belonging shape every aspect of the wellness journey and why no single path works for everyone. This opening moment will ground us in a shared understanding: that when employees feel supported, valued, and able to show up as their full selves, organizations see measurable gains in engagement, productivity, and performance.

11:15 a.m. [Interactive Panel Discussion with Attendee Q&A](#) **Accessibility by Default: Embedding Inclusion Before Barriers Appear**

Moderator:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital,
Signal49 Research

Panellists:

Lindsay Coffin, Principal Research Associate,
Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Joanna Goode, Executive Director, Canadian
Association for Supported Employment (CASE)

Christine Malone, Manager, National Equity,
Diversity and Inclusion, Canada Post

For wellness to function as a strategy, accessibility must be embedded into how work is designed—not treated as an afterthought. Yet many workplace accessibility strategies still rely on employees to disclose their accommodation needs. Evidence shows that stigma, power dynamics, and perceived career risk can prevent employees from coming forward. When organizations depend on disclosure, the accessibility barriers that are built into everyday systems don't change, limiting engagement, performance, and talent outcomes.

This moderated panel discussion will examine why disclosure-based approaches fall short and what proactive, systems-based accessibility looks like in practice. Panellists will explore how common workplace policies and processes can unintentionally exclude talent and how design-led accessibility can remove barriers while strengthening organizational culture.

Participants will leave with clear and practical insights to help move beyond reactive accommodations and embed accessibility by default, without placing the burden on employees to disclose.

12:00 p.m. [Break](#)

12:15 p.m. Concurrent Block – Set 1

Concurrent Block 1 – Session 1A
Flexible/Distributed Leadership

From Insight to Action: Advancing and Retaining Indigenous Talent in the Workplace

Moderator:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital,
Signal49 Research

Speakers:

Stefan Fournier, Executive Director, Immigration,
Indigenous & Northern Communities, Sustainability,
Signal49 Research

Bethany Haalboom, Lead Research Associate,
Indigenous & Northern Communities, Signal49 Research

Alicia Hussain, Senior Research Associate, Indigenous
& Northern Communities, Signal49 Research

Carrie Lamb, Co-Founder, Sacred Workplaces

Across sectors, Indigenous peoples encounter systemic workplace barriers shaped by historical and ongoing inequities, which affect their career progression and long-term participation in the workforce. This session brings together Signal49 researchers and Carrie Lamb, Co-Founder of Sacred Workplaces, for a panel discussion that bridges empirical research and applied practice.

Signal49's research team will share their latest insights on barriers and opportunities for Indigenous peoples in healthcare professions, focusing specifically on Indigenous physicians and community health workers. They will explore what governments, post-secondary institutions, health authorities, and training organizations have or could put in place to support Indigenous health care workers.

Building on these insights, Carrie Lamb will share perspectives from her work supporting organizations in aligning values with decolonized leadership and HR practices. Her work also addresses Signal49's findings that show gaps in how organizations take responsibility, how they evaluate people in culturally safe ways, and how leaders reflect Indigenous values.

This session moves beyond awareness to action, offering both evidence-based insights and practical tools, including mentorship models, culturally grounded training approaches, and organizational strategies to support recruitment, retention, and the advancement of Indigenous talent.

12:15 p.m. **Concurrent Block 1 – Session 1B**
Technology, AI & Human Centred Work

Beyond Surveillance: Designing Responsible People Analytics

Moderator:

Leah Ringwald, Associate Director, Human Capital,
Signal49 Research

Speakers:

Paula Allen, Global Leader and Vice President,
Research, Insights, and Strategic Communications,
TELUS Health

Ehsan Etezad, Organizational Psychologist, PhD(c),
Co-Founder & CEO, MEUS Science corp.

People analytics has the potential to unlock powerful insights that improve performance, equity, and decision-making. But without intentional, ethical design, it can quickly erode trust and compromise privacy. This expert-led session will explore how organizations can build people analytics practices that are transparent, responsible, and aligned with organizational values. Participants will examine practical approaches to drafting responsible analytics policies, establishing clear guardrails for ethical data use, and engaging employees with openness and clarity about how data is collected and applied. Attendees will leave with concrete tools to balance insight with trust, ensuring people analytics strengthens, rather than undermines, culture and accountability.

12:15 p.m. **Concurrent Block 1 – Session 1C**
Mental Health & Inclusion

Reducing Hidden Burnout in High Performers

Speakers:

Scott Ste Marie, Neuroscience-informed Mental Health
Educator and Mindfulness Coach

Dr. Tomi Mitchell, Family Physician and Founder, Holistic
Wellness Strategies

High performers often mask early signs of strain, carrying hidden workloads that quietly escalate into burnout and costly turnover. While these risks undermine performance, many organizations lack the structures, policies, or analytics needed to identify issues before they become crises. This session will explore the systemic drivers that place disproportionate pressure on top talent and highlight strategic approaches that protect performance without reinforcing overextension.

Participants will learn how to:

- Identify organizational and policy blind spots that contribute to burnout in high-performing talent.
- Use workforce insights and risk indicators to detect strain earlier and more accurately.
- Implement systemic, sustainable interventions that preserve both wellbeing and performance.

1:15 p.m. **Interactive Break**

1:45 p.m. Plenary

Work Design → Impact

The Business Case for Wellbeing: A Measurement Framework for Leaders

Moderator:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Mina Johl, Founder & CEO, Purple Wins

Many organizations recognize that wellbeing influences performance, yet efforts to support workers often stall because traditional metrics fail to capture the operational realities affecting employee experience. One critical factor consistently overlooked is time: not hours worked, but the loss of time caused by misalignment, friction, and work environments that consume energy faster than employees can restore it. When this unseen time loss accumulates, it drives burnout, slows decision-making, and increases retention risk.

This session introduces a practical measurement framework that positions time as a core wellbeing indicator, linking employees' lived experience directly to productivity, operational flow, and workforce stability. HR and business leaders will learn a structured approach to identify where time is being lost, how it affects performance, and how returning that time to employees can strengthen their focus, effectiveness, and overall wellbeing.

2:15 p.m. Break

2:30 p.m. Concurrent Block – Set 2

Concurrent Block 2 – Session 2A

Mental Health & Inclusion

Mental Health by Design: Integrating Supports into Work Practices

Moderator:

Leah Ringwald, Associate Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Michael Cooper, Vice President of Data and Partnerships, Mental Health Research Canada (MHRC)
Leora Hornstein, Well-being Specialist, Cenovus Energy

Burnout and mental strain are often connected to the structure of work itself. To address this, mental health must be considered within daily tasks. This expert-led workshop-style session will explore how workflows can be redesigned to include mental health supports within the architecture of work, thereby reducing strain and enabling recovery.

Participants will learn how to integrate micro-recovery moments, support pathways, and lightweight measures of impact into daily work, and will leave with practical tools and a clear approach to redesigning work that sustains performance while protecting mental health.

2:30 p.m. **Concurrent Block 2 – Session 2B**

Work Design → Impact

The Productivity Trap: The Hidden Costs of Grind Culture

Speakers:

Chantaie Allick, Co-Founder, Re-Work

Natasha Singh, Co-Founder, Re-Work

Meet your speakers

Work culture often glorifies overwork, viewing packed calendars and exhaustion as badges of honour that signal commitment and value. At the same time, organizations and leaders struggle to balance achieving bottom-line goals with working sustainably, creating operational friction and team burnout. In this fireside chat, presenters will unpack the hidden costs of glorifying grind culture and introduce wisdom and science-backed approaches to reimagining work and designing cultures that align ambition and the bottom line with team member wellbeing and performance.

Participants will learn how to:

- Reset attitudes and approaches to work that don't serve the business or people.
- Identify the signs of burnout culture and learn how to address them.
- Redesign organizational approaches to increase output without increasing stress.
- Reduce the drivers of sick leave, stress leave, and employee attrition.
- Build dynamic, creative teams doing their best work.
- Develop new performance measures that reinforce a sustainable pace.

2:30 p.m. **Concurrent Block 2 – Session 2C**

Mental Health & Inclusion

Employee Financial Wellness as a Business Strategy

Speaker:

Elke Rubach, President and Founder, Rubach Wealth Holistic Family Advisors™

Financial stress and income insecurity are among the most persistent, and least visible, drivers of employee mental health strain. When people are worried about making ends meet, managing debt, or navigating unpredictable costs, the result is often exhaustion, anxiety, and reduced cognitive bandwidth at work.

In this session, employees and employers will explore how financial insecurity can show up as disengagement, absenteeism, and lower productivity. Participants will gain insight into both the employee experience and the organizational impact, and learn practical ways to support financial wellbeing and create a more stable, focused, and engaged workforce.

3:15 p.m. Break

Day 1 / April 22, 2026 (cont'd)

3:30 p.m. Plenary

Flexible/Distributed Leadership

Supporting Individual and Organizational Change Through Involvement and Influence

Moderator:

Leah Ringwald, Associate Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Dr. Joti Samra, CEO & Founder, MyWorkplaceHealth

This session is ideally suited to organizations experiencing change and seeking to bring their team together. They can achieve this through “involvement and influence,” which is one of 13 psychosocial factors in the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety that can affect workplace mental health.

It focuses on creating a work environment where employees are included in discussions about how their work is done, how important decisions are made, and how psychological health and safety in the workplace can be sustained during difficult times.

Participants will learn about actions they can take to better understand the role and importance of psychological health and safety and how to enhance it within their organization. Topics to be addressed include:

- the reality of workplace mental health
- the National Standard and psychosocial factors
- how to enhance involvement and influence in the workplace
- how to support individual and organizational change through involvement and influence

Day 2 / April 23, 2026

The Roadmap

11:00 a.m. Welcoming Remarks

Recap and Today's Intentions

Speaker:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Join us to reflect on the insights, conversations, and moments that shaped yesterday's sessions as we open day two of the conference. Together, we'll revisit the key themes and learnings that brought us to this point, grounding ourselves in the collective progress we've made. From that reflection, we'll shift our attention to today's intention—a day designed to synthesize ideas, deepen connection, and chart forward-looking action. This opening session will help us recentre, reenergize, and prepare for a meaningful close to our shared experience.

The challenge ahead isn't just about technology or skills—it's about the foundational human work that organizations have been putting off. Burnout was rising long before the latest wave of change. While many organizations invest in wellness programs, few address the leadership behaviours and systems that create strain in the first place. New tools and pressures are arriving in a landscape where people are already depleted.

Drawing on years of industry expertise and experience leading organizations through disruption, our keynote speaker will explore what it will take for workplaces to meet this new era with confidence. Learn how employers can build trust, strengthen relationships, and create environments where people feel safe leaning into change, rather than bracing against it. These same practices not only prepare organizations for what's coming, but also create cultures where people can truly be well.

11:15 a.m. Keynote

Technology, AI & Human-centred Future of Work

What's Next at Work: The Human Leadership Challenges Behind Compounding Change

Moderator:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Andrea Adams, HR Consultant, Host of The HR Hub podcast

Work is evolving faster than most organizations can comfortably absorb. While leadership strategizes, employees are often navigating change in their own ways: sometimes stepping back, sometimes adapting quietly when they're unsure how their perspectives will be received. Their silence is an indicator that many workplaces are struggling to build the trust, clarity, and connection people need to navigate continuous transformation.

12:00 p.m. Break

Day 2 / April 23, 2026 (cont'd)

12:15 p.m. **Concurrent Block – Set 3**

Concurrent Block 3 – Session 3A

Flexible/Distributed Leadership

How to Build Trust and Lead Hybrid Teams without Monitoring

Moderator:

Debra Burke, Lead Council Manager, Signal49 Research

Speakers:

Beata Chami, Organizational Psychologist, Executive Coach, Mediator and Researcher

Neil Seeman, Senior Fellow and Associate Professor at the University of Toronto's Institute for Health Policy, Management and Evaluation, Board Member of Mental Health Research Canada

The rapid shift to remote and hybrid work has led many organizations to adopt monitoring tools that unintentionally undermine trust, autonomy, and workplace culture. As leaders, the challenge is no longer about visibility—it's about accountability and meaningful oversight. This session will explore how managers can move from activity-based oversight to outcome-driven leadership that supports both performance and engagement. Participants will learn from expert practitioners how to define clear outcome agreements, replace monitoring with meaningful, results-focused check-ins, and apply trust-building techniques that strengthen accountability while sustaining a healthy, high-performing culture.

12:15 p.m. **Concurrent Block 3 – Session 3B**

Work Design → Impact

Neuroinclusive by Design: Reducing Cognitive Load

Moderator:

Jennifer Fane, Lead Research Associate, Education & Skills, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Wanda Deschamps, Founder and Principal, Liberty Co

[Meet your speakers](#)

Reliance on unwritten expectations, complex processes, and cognitive overload limit both performance and wellbeing and unintentionally exclude neurodivergent employees. This interactive lab will invite leaders to rethink how work is designed, not how people adapt. Participants will explore practical ways to redesign workflows, tools, and supports to reduce cognitive load and better enable diverse thinkers. Using a structured redesign canvas, attendees will learn how to create effective job aids and identify measures that link cognitive inclusion to improved engagement, performance, and outcomes.

12:15 p.m. **Concurrent Block 3 – Session 3C**

Technology, AI & Human-Centred Work

Preparing for AI: Building Readiness Through Psychological Safety and Learning

Moderator:

Michael Bassett, Director, Research Impact, Research Office, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Treena Reilkoff, Founder, TLR Solutions4Conflict Inc.

As AI becomes a growing part of the workplace, many organizations are under pressure to move quickly, often without a clear roadmap.

This session explores what it truly means to prepare for AI, using the idea that "AI is like Everest - you need to prepare for it; you can't just show up and expect to reach the summit." This fireside chat will highlight the human side of AI adoption, not the tools.

Participants will gain insight into:

- Why psychological safety is critical for learning and adapting to AI
- How leaders can support openness, curiosity, and skill development across their teams
- What it takes to build readiness in an environment where not everyone has the same level of knowledge or confidence

This session is designed for leaders looking to support their teams through AI adoption by fostering a culture of learning, trust, and continuous development.

1:15 p.m. **Break**

1:30 p.m. **Plenary**

Health & Safety Case Study Awards 2025–26

Speakers:

Carrie Bjola, CEO, Service Hospitality

Kara Edwards, Vice President, Responsible Care, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada

Finalists:

Magnus Ma, Finalist

Maymun Osman, Finalist

Milu Thomson, Finalist

Join us for this engaging session celebrating innovation, research excellence, and real-world problem-solving in health and safety through the 2025–26 Minerva Canada Case Study Competition. Launched in September 2025, this national competition challenged post-secondary students and recent graduates from across Canada to apply critical thinking and evidence-based analysis to a contemporary case study informed by industry and policy perspectives.

Delivered in partnership with the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Service Hospitality, and Signal49 Research, this year's competition encouraged participants to develop practical, forward-thinking solutions to complex challenges facing Canadian industries and communities.

We will announce this year's winners and hear from selected finalists as they share insights and highlights from their submissions. Attendees will gain fresh perspectives on interdisciplinary problem-solving, applied research, and innovative approaches that bridge academia and the workplace.

Don't miss this opportunity to celebrate emerging leaders and explore how thoughtful research can drive meaningful change.



Day 2 / April 23, 2026 (cont'd)

2:15 p.m. Interactive Break

2:45 p.m. Concurrent Block – Set 4

Concurrent Block 4 – Session 4A Mental Health & Inclusion

Trauma-Informed HR: Suicide in the Workplace Toolkit

Moderator:

Leah Ringwald, Associate Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Tracey Pickup, Education Specialist, Canadian Mental Health Association Alberta, Centre for Suicide Prevention

Workplace communities can be deeply affected by a suicide, and leaders may find themselves navigating grief, stigma, and uncertainty without clear guidance. To effectively support healing, organizations must undertake thoughtful planning and have responsive practices in place before a crisis occurs. This session will equip HR leaders and managers with a toolkit that outlines compassionate, practical approaches for responding to suicide in the workplace while fostering a culture of safety, empathy, and prevention.

Participants will learn how to:

- Identify essential preparatory actions, such as forming a postvention team and developing an effective suicide response plan.
- Take appropriate steps following a suicide, including communicating with the family, sharing the news with employees, and supporting teams through grief.
- Support individual employees in the aftermath of a suicide and guide them toward helpful resources and ongoing assistance.
- Strengthen prevention efforts by recognizing risks, promoting mental health awareness, and embedding supportive measures throughout the workplace.

2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Block 4 – Session 4B**
From Work Design to Measurable Impact
Wellbeing as a Pillar of ESG Strategies

Speakers:

Hilary McVey, Managing Partner of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility, Deloitte Canada

Rachel Jurgens, Partner & National Access, Equity and People Risk Client Services Leader, Deloitte Canada

As organizations increasingly rely on ESG commitments to drive long-term performance and accountability, employee wellbeing has become a critical foundation for sustaining a healthy, equitable, and resilient workforce. This session will equip participants with strategies to position wellbeing as a core component of ESG, sustainability, and DEI goals. The discussion will highlight actionable approaches to designing, aligning, and measuring wellbeing initiatives that create meaningful social and business impact.

2:45 p.m. **Concurrent Block 4 – Session 4C**
Technology, AI & HumanCentred
WorkCentred Work

Responsible AI for HR Leaders: Protecting Wellbeing and Trust

Moderator:

Storm Balint, Research Associate, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Katrina Ingram, Founder and CEO, Ethically Aligned AI

As AI tools become more integrated into HR, employee experience, and wellbeing initiatives, leaders are increasingly responsible for asking the right questions and recognizing the risks these technologies can introduce. This fast-paced session will give HR leaders a practical, non-technical look at how AI can influence wellbeing, equity, and trust across the employee lifecycle. Learn where bias most commonly enters AI-powered HR tools, how to ask the right questions of vendors and internal partners, and what checkpoints help ensure responsible, people-first implementation.

Participants will gain an understanding of leadership practices and conversation approaches that can help support fairness, transparency, and inclusion as AI becomes part of HR operations—without needing to be AI experts. This session is perfect for HR leaders who want to champion human-centred innovation while protecting what matters most: people.

3:45 p.m. Break

4:00 p.m. **Keynote**
Work Design → Impact
Wellbeing Starts With Systems

Moderator:

Alana Painter, Director, Human Capital, Signal49 Research

Speaker:

Dr. Raj Choudhury, Professor of Organisational Behaviour, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). [Meet your speaker.](#)

Canadian workplaces are at a tipping point. Burnout, leadership gaps, and rapid technological disruption have exposed structural flaws in work design. These challenges aren't about individual resilience, they're rooted in systems that no longer fit today's realities. This keynote will reframe wellbeing as a strategic lever for organizational success. We'll explore why traditional programs fail, the evidence behind systemic burnout, and the critical shift from perks to integrated systems built on work design, culture, and leadership.

Participants will learn how to:

- Recognize structural drivers of burnout and their business impact.
- Understand why wellbeing must move from programs to systems.
- Identify foundational steps to redesign work for resilience.

4:45 p.m. [Closing Remarks](#)

Building Better Workplaces That Last

Speaker:

Dianne Williams, Vice-President, Signal49 Research

This closing session will bring together the key insights and patterns that emerged throughout the Better Workplace Conference to reinforce a central idea: better workplaces are not built through isolated programs or individual resilience, but through intentional systems.

Drawing on themes of wellbeing, inclusion, leadership, work design, and technology, this reflection will challenge leaders to move from insight to action by strengthening the structures that shape everyday work. Participants will leave with a clear call to focus on creating workplaces that are resilient, human-centred, and built to last.

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