

# Summary Conference Report



## Safe Respectful & Inclusive Workplaces: Stakeholders & Strategies

May 28 and 29, 2009  
London, Ontario



**Centre for Research & Education**  
on Violence against Women and Children



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# ***Safe, Respectful and Inclusive Workplaces: Stakeholders and Strategies***

## ***Conference Summary Report***

### **A. Introduction**

The Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, at the University of Western Ontario, hosted a conference to bring together a wide range of stakeholders concerned about violence in the workplace. The conference, *Safe, Respectful and Inclusive Workplaces: Stakeholders and Strategies*, was held on May 28 and 29 at the Convention Centre in London, Ontario.

Close to 300 participants from across Canada met for two days of discussions to explore different strategies and approaches, to learn from each other's experiences and to exchange promising practices emerging from those experiences. Plenary sessions and workshops provided a mix of opportunities to hear from early pioneers, leaders in the field and practitioners. A rich variety of participants from community agencies, employers, unions, academia, the legal profession and government provided an opportunity to explore these issues from many perspectives and in intensive detail.

A copy of the agenda for the conference is attached as Appendix A, which outlines the 24 workshops and 16 plenary presentations.

The conference was honoured by the presence of Anita Hill, who gave the keynote address. Professor Hill came to international prominence when she courageously testified about her experience of sexual harassment at the hands of Clarence Thomas, a nominee to the US Supreme Court, during his confirmation hearings.

Barb MacQuarrie, Director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, and Catherine Burr, Research Associate at the Centre were the conference co-chairs and were assisted by a conference committee and staff (see Appendix B).

The conference grew out of previous work by the Centre, which identified the need to bring together practitioners and researchers from different fields who are working on this issue. In the fall of 2008, the Centre convened a Think Tank to explore and discuss some themes on this issue which influenced the design of the conference.

Evaluations from participants indicated the conference was a tremendous success, and provided many opportunities for learning new ideas, information and tools that participants can apply in their area of work. Overall, participants rated the conference as very effective.

## **B. The Need for Action**

Anita Hill spoke of the impact of gender violence, as one element of workplace violence, as a human rights violation, a public health crisis and an impediment to development, security and peace. We are all injured by it.

Those who face harassment and bullying in the workplace often go through months and years of enormous personal stress, during which their reality is denied and the invasive, disrespectful and violent behaviours of others go unchecked. The cost to their health, their finances, their personal life, and their families are extremely high. Often, they suffer depression, sleeplessness, physical illness, lost wages due to time away from work, and their children and spouses are also affected by the stress. They bear the financial burden of legal proceedings and travel to hearings, divorce, separation, and strain on children. For those who are murdered in the workplace or by a co-worker, their families suffer the traumatic loss of someone they love.

Ms. Hill cited research indicating that overall, 21% of the full-time employed adults polled identified themselves as victims of workplace violence, and 64% percent of them indicated their ability to work was significantly impacted.

In the US, intimate partner violence victims lose the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs in lost work time, and nearly 5.6 million days of household productivity, all as a direct result of the violence.

Domestic violence has a tremendous impact at work: 57% of employees know someone affected, 44% experienced the impact at work, and 45% have had a co-worker who was a victim. Among victims of domestic violence, 74% are harassed at work. 37% of those involved in partner violence felt its impact reflected in lateness, missing work, difficulty keeping a job, and difficulty advancing in their career.

Health care workers are one group who are particularly at risk. Among nurses, 36% have experienced physical violence in the workplace, 67% have been the target of verbal abuse in the workplace, and 11% report that they have been the target of sexual abuse, all in the workplace, and primarily at the hands of patients and doctors.

American studies have calculated the cost to employers of sexual harassment due to lost productivity and turnover, as being in the billions of dollars. No equivalent studies for the cost of racial harassment or other forms of workplace violence were presented, but the impact is likely significant.

## **C. Five Key Themes: A Multi-Dimensional Approach**

### **Context**

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The conference began with an opening ceremony by Dr. Gloria Alvernaz Mulcahy, of Tsalagi or Cherokee ancestry, grounding the conference in concepts of harmony and balance, and the importance of rootedness in who we are and where we come from, of knowing what our starting point is. These messages resonated through the rest of the conference.

The workplace is a key point of intervention to address violence in our society for many reasons. The majority of the population spends a large portion of their adult lives in the workplace. Because people are in the workplace out of necessity, workplaces taken as a whole are highly representative of Canadian society. Work is important to individuals on many dimensions: financially, socially and emotionally. For all of these reasons, it is an excellent location for tackling inclusion, and it is probably because of this that so many of legal and human rights cases seeking to advance inclusion arise from the workplace. Hence, the topic of the conference, creating safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces, is one of critical importance.

Workplace violence is an “iceberg issue”, in that employers, governments and the general public are only beginning to understand both its significance and its pervasiveness. At this point, only certain aspects of the issue receive widespread public attention, such as sexual harassment and the very rare occurrence of murder. The pervasiveness of other forms of workplace violence, such as racial harassment and bullying, have not reached even this initial stage of awareness and recognition.

Several themes emerged in different discussions throughout the conference, at both the plenaries and workshops, which could be summarized as a series of key principles or concepts that are essential to developing effective strategies and interventions designed to create safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces. These are highlighted below.

#### **1. Rooted in Lived Experience**

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Strategies and interventions need to be rooted in and constantly informed by the lived experience of those who have faced violence in the workplace. The conference began with first-person accounts from Bonnie Robichaud, Yvonne Seguin, Sharon Scrimshaw and Hazel Magnussen, each of whom has paid a high personal cost for incidents of workplace violence that touched their lives.

Throughout the conference, presenters referred to the importance of listening to those who are facing harassment and other forms of violence in the workplace, and to ensure that whatever action is taken or whatever measures are implemented take account of their concerns and the obstacles they have faced.

#### **2. Social Location**

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Every experience of harassment, bullying, verbal or physical abuse and attacks, or other forms of violence in the workplace, and every experience of respect, safety and

inclusion, takes place within a specific context that is mediated by race, culture, immigration status, disability, gender, and a host of other factors, such as whether the workplace is unionized and the precariousness of employment. Often several of these factors intersect.

Our analysis of safety and violence and our choice of appropriate interventions need to incorporate these factors, experienced by the people in the workplace. Several speakers addressed the realities of racialized communities, the disability community, faith communities, and women in the workplace.

An analysis of racial harassment in the workplace does not fit well within a general discourse on harassment. For example, most racialized people report that their experience of racial harassment in the workplace is not primarily at the hands of supervisors but overwhelmingly peer-to-peer. This significantly affects the choice of strategies to address it.

The understanding of racism in the mainstream still does not recognize the complexity and nuances of the lived reality of racialized people, including significant differences in the experience of racism within the diverse population of racialized people.

Furthermore, the mainstream perspectives may fail to see racial harassment as violence, but may well see the response to this harassment as violence. Victims respond to harassment differently, and if racialized people respond with reactions that are characterized as violence, then the original cause or provocation often goes unnoticed.

Our responses to these situations are significant because what is done to one person who is racialized, or a member of a religious minority such as Islam, or a person with disabilities, impacts everyone of that community and the effects ripple through the workplace, creating either a climate of inclusion or a climate that accepts harassment, whether subtle or overt, as normal.

Our interventions, both formal (such as legislation or collective agreements) and informal (such as the actions of co-workers or supervisors) need to reflect this diversity of experience in the workplace. It also means that there is a need for a continuing discussion to understand the complex dynamics of violence, and the dynamics of respect and inclusion, in light of these diverse realities.

Failure to meet these challenges not only has repercussions for losses in productivity in workplaces, it also diminishes the integrity of our multicultural democratic society.

### **3. Full Spectrum of Interventions: Inclusion, Prevention and Response**

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Attention tends to focus on the more extreme examples of workplace violence, notably murder. Media reports often imply that such murders are random and unpredictable acts of violence. However, this is simply not the case - most are preceded by a series of warning signs. For example, in the period leading up to the murder of Lori Dupont at her place of work in Hotel Dieu Hospital in Windsor, there were at least 37 events indicating the seriousness of the situation.

Disruptive behaviour in the workplace can be seen along a continuum from less serious to more serious, sometimes characterized as actions that pose a low risk of grave

physical injury or death, to actions that pose a high risk. Violence in the workplace rarely starts with moderate or high risk behaviour, but most typically begins at the low end of the spectrum, and then escalates.

Acts of bullying or harassment, if unchecked, almost always escalate to more serious actions. Given this evidence, dealing with the non-physical or more subtle acts of violence in the workplace becomes imperative. Prevention and early intervention were repeatedly emphasized by presenters, and some of the workshops showcased threat assessment tools that can be used to help recognize and understand early indicators and warning signs.

An even more fundamental means of prevention is to ensure respectful and inclusive workplaces; to actively design measures to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities, full acceptance of different faiths and cultural backgrounds, and engaging with different views and perspectives that arise from cultural, racial and religious diversity.

#### **4. Full Spectrum of Types of Workplace Violence**

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Our understanding and definition of workplace violence must include the full spectrum of violence, including psychological, emotional, sexual and physical violence.

Many presenters echoed agreement with the view expressed in a 2002 joint report issued in Geneva by the International Labour Office **ILO**, the International Council of Nurses **ICN**, the World Health Organisation **WHO**, and Public Services International **PSI** that,

While the existence of personal physical violence at the workplace has always been recognized, the existence of psychological violence has been long underestimated and only now receives due attention. Psychological violence is currently emerging as a priority concern at the workplace.

It is also increasingly recognized that personal psychological violence is often perpetrated through repeated behaviour, of a type which by itself may be relatively minor but which cumulatively can become a very serious form of violence. Although a single incident can suffice, psychological violence often consists of repeated, unwelcome, unreciprocated and imposed upon action which may have a devastating effect on the victim.

The same report defines psychological violence as;

Intentional use of power, including threat of physical force, against another person or group, that can result in harm to physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. It includes verbal abuse, bullying/mobbing, harassment and threats.

Psychological harassment has been specifically addressed in the Quebec Labour Code and the Saskatchewan Workplace Health and Safety legislation. This type of behaviour may also be referred to as personal harassment or bullying. Existing laws in Ontario require

harassment to be discriminatory. The Ontario Human Rights Code defines 16 prohibited grounds for harassment and discrimination. Harassment that is 'status-blind' or targets a person for a reason not defined in the Code may contravene workplace based codes of conduct, anti-harassment or violence prevention policies, but it is legal.

Psychological violence encompasses psychological harassment, but is much broader. It also includes behaviours such as abuse of authority, sexual harassment, racial harassment, harassment based on other differences, all forms of discrimination and poisoned work environment. Indeed, the vast majority of abusive behaviours in the workplace fall within the realm of psychological violence.

Left unchecked, all forms of workplace violence escalate. Psychological violence may escalate to physical violence. Whether or not it escalates to physical violence, those who experience it are adversely affected. A large body of literature reports a wide range of adverse effects on physical and mental health including, loss of confidence, shame, humiliation, stress, loss of sleep, severe anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), reduced immunity to infection, gastrointestinal disorders, hypertension, and increased risk of cardiovascular diseases.

Psychological violence, whether manifested as harassment on grounds defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code or as bullying generates stress for the victim that inevitably has physical impacts. Medical research has clearly documented the cost for the human body of prolonged stress. Victims of harassment and bullying report tremendous social, psychological and psychosomatic implications for their health,

Domestic violence is important to include in our understanding of types of workplace violence, because it does occur in the workplace. At least 75% of individuals suffering from domestic violence have some elements of it occur at their place of work, phone calls, visits by abuser, violent attacks at the place of work, stalking that originates at the place of work.

Bullying has been called the silent epidemic: it is four times more prevalent than illegal forms of harassment. The overwhelming majority of targets are women.

Overall, we need to have the clear goal of a violence-free workplace and a violence-free society, because these are related. Domestic violence, racism, Islamophobia and many other examples of violence in the society at large spill over into the workplace.

## **5. Individual, Workplace and Systemic Levels**

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Anita Hill, in her keynote address, referred to the common metaphor of seeing both “the forest” and “the trees” and she added a third element to the metaphor, “the leaf”. In elaborating this metaphor she highlighted the need to look at issues of workplace safety and inclusion at all three levels: the individual’s responsibility and scope for action, the role of the employer and the workplace to create safe and respectful work environments, and the importance of action at the systemic or societal level, through legislation, policy, programs and leadership at senior levels. This concept was echoed throughout the conference.

Individual empowerment and responsibility is important: co-workers can play a key role in recognizing the situation, supporting the victim of harassment, and raising issues of

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workplace safety to begin the process of change. Managers and union leaders in the workplace can set a clear tone that harassment and other forms of violence are unacceptable. Individual accountability and engagement can make a difference.

However, personal action cannot adequately address the problems in a workplace where the norms and daily practice undermine inclusion and place employees at risk of harassment, bullying and other forms of violence. Employers, too, have important responsibilities and unions can also play a very positive role.

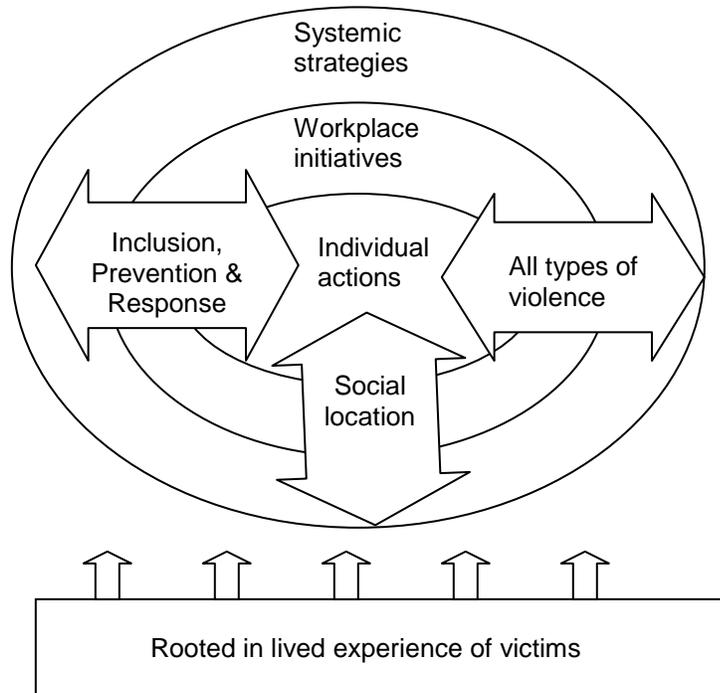
The systemic framework within which workplaces, employers and individuals operate is also key. Legislation, broad public awareness, and changes that permeate societal institutions such as the media, the justice system or the education system can have an enormous impact. Presenters also noted that the increased economic inequality that arisen in Canada over the last number of years can also be a contributing factor; unequal societies are more prone to violence, including in the workplace.

The conference examined issues and strategies at all three of these levels, and also the inter-relationship among them.

### **Integrating the Five Key Themes**

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These five themes recurred in various forms throughout the conference. As the conference explored specific practice and strategies at the individual, workplace and systemic level, it became clear that it was important to consider all of the principle themes outlined above. As such these five themes can be seen as an inter-related model which can be used to map possible practices and strategies to address workplace violence.



#### **D. Interventions and Strategies at the Systemic Level**

Anita Hill called for action by leaders: legislator, and judges have to be accountable for ending violence, and it is important that we articulate their interest in doing so.

One key point of systemic intervention is through legislation, and the conference discussed legislation on workplace violence, accessibility for people with disabilities, and human rights generally.

Existing and emerging case law and legislation make it clear that employers have a significant and expanding duty to address violence in the workplace. Employers are expected to have an increasing focus on prevention approach, including a process for routine risk assessment, clear policy, guidelines and processes, and proper training for all levels of staff.

Definitions of workplace violence contained in legislation are expanding in several respects. The legal framework increasingly recognizes that harassment occurs not just by those in positions of power towards subordinates, but also can be worker-to-worker, and client to worker, as is often the case in the health care field.

The full continuum of violence, including psychological harassment or bullying, is being addressed in many cases, notably in the Québec and Saskatchewan legislation. The diverse definitions applied to psychologically abusive workplace behaviours can obscure the common dynamics at play. We can begin to meet this challenge by separating definitions from remedies. We need a broad and inclusive definition of psychological violence as a foundation for prevention work. The definition can itemize specific types of

psychological violence. All workplaces can be required to have policies and training in place to prevent the range of psychological and physical violence. Remedies for diverse types of workplace violence may be pursued through existing mechanisms as appropriate, whether internal or external to the workplace (i.e., internal complaint procedures, union grievances, resolution processes the Human Rights Tribunal, grievance arbitration, civil litigation, etc.)

Bill 168, a proposed act in Ontario addressing workplace violence was seen as an important step forward in that province, and was lauded for, among other elements, a more gender sensitive approach as exemplified in its domestic violence provisions. Although the Act improves upon existing legislation by adding a definition of harassment, it falls short of recognizing harassment as a form of violence. In separating physical forms of violence from harassment, and prescribing stricter standards for addressing physical violence, important opportunities for preventing an escalation of violence are lost. This approach also fails to recognize that physical harm can and does result from harassment, resulting in serious personal and financial costs to individuals as well as significant costs to employers and potentially to the WSIB.

The new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act presents a major opportunity for re-thinking accessibility in the province, which is significant for creating safe and inclusive workplaces for people with disabilities. The Act shifts the focus from accommodating individuals to creating comprehensively accessible environments throughout the province, over the long term. This more comprehensive, preventive approach is starting to inform legislative frameworks in workplace violence, but there is still considerable progress remaining.

In formulating these interventions, one of the key questions is: whose perspective informs the development of policy, legislation, regulation, and court decisions? It is important that actions at this level balance the needs of all with recognizing the specific realities of many groups in society who have been historically marginalized. Using an intersectional or an anti-oppression analysis to inform the development of systemic interventions helps ensure the diversity of voices that make up our society are heard. For example, the historical impact of colonialism and globalization has disproportionately disadvantaged certain groups of women, including Aboriginal women.

The workplace does not exist in isolation of other social structures and trends, and current events and the resulting public opinion have an impact on relationships within the workplace, including the acceptability of harassment and bullying. This has become particularly clear for Muslims in Canada in recent years, and especially for women in the Muslim community who have faced challenges in regards to their right to wear the hijab.

Subtle exclusions in the workplace have an impact but are not easily addressed through legal frameworks. The route of legal action also has shortcomings in that a remedy can be ordered, but the damage is already done and the message of exclusion has already been conveyed. Other messages and actions at a systemic level are needed to convey the critical importance of inclusion for a healthy society, and the unacceptability of harassing or ostracizing some because of their religion, race, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics.

Public awareness as a systemic intervention was also highlighted in other discussion, especially around issues of domestic violence as they intersect with the workplace. The role of opinion leaders, the media and public education campaigns were emphasized,

and the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign was examined as one of the promising practices in this area. (This program is discussed further under individual actions below.)

Several jurisdictions have formal review processes for murders in domestic violence cases, and this process has the potential for significant systemic impact. Washington State has one of most extensive processes, but they are in place in many states in the USA. In Canada only Ontario has a Domestic Violence Death Review Committee currently, although Committees are being formed in New Brunswick and Manitoba. The Ontario Domestic Violence Death Review Committee reviews every domestic homicide that has cleared the court system, about 30-35 per year. These violent incidents do not emerge without warning: 85% of these cases have seven or more risk markers prior to the murder. In the case of Lori Dupont, killed in her workplace, a hospital in Windsor, Ontario 37 critical events or warning signs, and 84 opportunities where someone could have intervened were identified.

An important conclusion that emerged from the review of this experience is that domestic violence spills over into the workplace, and thus domestic violence is a workplace violence issue.

Review mechanisms such as this can lead to recommendations that have an impact at the systemic level. For example, recommendations have emerged from the inquest into the murder of Lori Dupont, some of which are directed specifically to the Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital and some of which are directed to all hospitals in the province. Hotel Dieu Grace has adopted all the recommendations. In adopting the recommendations the leadership and the staff of the hospital made a vow – to change, to grow, to learn and in so doing, to honour the memory of Lori Dupont.

In terms of actions that can be taken, public awareness and professional development have emerged as key areas of intervention. Public awareness is important because friends, family and colleagues may recognize the warning signs and offer help, if they are made aware of what these are and what to do. The Neighbours, Friends and Families initiative is working to do this.

Professional development and training is also essential to teach warning signs and to co-workers how to take appropriate preventive action. Put simply, all workplaces need to train all employees. It was observed more than once in the conference that most people, including professionals, have no idea what to do when they suspect a co-worker is a victim of violence. Everyone needs to learn basic response and support skills, and to practice them.

## **E. Workplace Initiatives**

Several employers and unions presented examples of policies, programs and practices they had instituted to address and prevent workplace violence, including Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO) and, in the United States, Liz Clairborne Inc, Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, and Illinois Violence Prevention Authority. Some of the practices shared paid particular attention to domestic violence while others addressed violence more generally. Some were focused on early intervention and response to specific acts of violence, and others considered more systematic ways of creating respectful and inclusive work environments.

### **Context**

The workplace context has a significant impact on the effectiveness of workplace initiatives on violence. For example, job insecurity affects reporting, the accountability culture in the organization affects the likelihood that speaking out will be punished or listened to, and overall organizational competence and capacity to respond influences how thoroughly and sustainably workplace violence initiatives will be implemented.

In addition to these elements, workplace harassment, bullying and other forms of violence are shaped by the racialized context in which they take place, by gender issues, by cultural differences, and by the intersectionality among these and other factors. For example, one of the workshops addressed the specific ways in which Aboriginal people experience trauma and violence in the workplace.

### **Recommended Practices**

The first step, in most cases, is a commitment to action from the most senior levels of leadership in the organization. In unionized workplaces, union involvement is also critical. A workplace policy needs to be developed that sets out the organization's commitment to a safe, respectful and inclusive work environment, and details the various actions and procedures in place. It is usually recommended that the policy be developed with people from different areas in the organization relevant to workplace violence, including human resources, legal, security, and others as appropriate. Outside advisors are also helpful to bring specific expertise in various aspects of the policy.

Generic harassment, discrimination and violence policies and procedures that do not take account of the differing vulnerability and impacts for employees by virtue of race, gender, disability and other factors cannot be effective.

A compendium of the recommended practices would include the following measures.

- Code of conduct for all employees
- Violence Prevention Policies
- Definitions of ViolenceRisk assessment Personal safety procedures (e.g. panic button, or personal alarm locator, where the person's picture and location comes up on security screen, for victims of domestic violence measures might include: post photo of perpetrator, provide security escort to car or public transit, temporary relocation to another facility, ensure employee has emergency cell phone, etc.)

- Environmental design (lighting, secure parking, etc.)
- Crisis response
- Training/education:
  - For all employees: warning signs, what actions are appropriate in different situations, early intervention and resolution strategies for low risk situations, the level of respect that they are expected to show to co-workers and that they have a right to expect from others, their rights, the complaint process, referrals and supports that are available
  - For managers, human resources staff, security personnel: specific training related to their responsibilities, appropriate action in different situations, limits of their expertise (e.g. it is important managers not act as counselors)
- Post-incident strategies (de-brief those affected, review to determine if changes in policy or procedure are needed, etc.)
- Complaint process: empower and obligate employees to report, third party fact-finder, complaint tracking and audit.
- EAP: ensure EAP providers understand violence issues comprehensively and are able to provide appropriate support. (A poll of women victims of domestic violence who used EAP indicated that 89% used the help they received, 71% report that their work performance improved after contacting their EAP, and 93% say that they would recommend that other women in similar situations contact their EAPs for help.)
- Return to work policy re: mental health
- Safe Workplace Advocate
- Ongoing workplace communications (brochures, posters, wallet card, staff meetings, company website / intranet, etc.) to enlist employees' help in ensuring the workplace is a violence-free zone. Make it clear they will not be penalized for seeking help or for showing concern for a co-worker who may be experiencing violence.
- Engage with members of the community working on violence issues, to raise community awareness and build partnerships for expertise and advice.

Various tools were reviewed in workshops that can assist in threat assessment, and in assessing the comprehensiveness of workplace policies.

It was observed that zero tolerance policies, although popular among the public, can discourage early disclosure and do not provide latitude to deal with less serious incidents. Zero tolerance policies may pose longer term legal problems if they conflict with the terms of collective agreements or counter the principles of progressive discipline.

Referral out to appropriate resources and expertise is key, as managers are not counselors, and are not skilled to deal with the emotional and psychological impacts of workplace violence and domestic violence.

Practices for investigators of complaints were reviewed, including assessing if an investigation is the right option, ensuring a clearly described complaint, effective methods of gathering and analyzing relevant facts, working in a unionized environment, using appropriately similar facts, and using the report to achieve resolution.

## **Union Involvement**

Unions are a key partner in addressing workplace violence and several presentations were made about strategies and experiences of unions in this area. Three main strategies were highlighted.

Labour Management meetings are an important forum to raise concerns about violence in the workplace, and to develop proposals for action, including the creation of a workplace policy and procedures. The Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee is particularly relevant, as violence is clearly a health and safety issue.

Unions can also work with employers to develop and consistently maintain a Code of Conduct and a policy on bullying, harassment and other forms of violence. It is important to include a strong role for the union and the Joint Health and Safety Committee in this policy initiative. Joint Health and Safety Committees are one of the very few workplace mechanisms in which employees and management have equal voice.

Collective bargaining is an important point of intervention in securing safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces, and several unions have model language for collective agreements. This can include definitions of abuse and harassment, complaint processes, roles and responsibilities of management and the union in addressing violence, in establishing and sustaining the various components of an effective violence prevention program. In addition, some unions have staff support for initiatives on workplace violence, such as the Women's Advocate position in CAW.

### **Inclusive and Respectful Workplaces**

Dealing with workplace violence is not just a matter of safety precautions and threat assessment for imminent physical violence, or an effective complaint and redress system for instances of harassment and bullying. More fundamentally, it involves active measures to create an inclusive workplace that prevents such incidents from occurring. Several workshops explored ways of doing this.

The presentations and discussions identified several recommended practices, including:

- Ensure that governance, decision-making and accountability mechanisms support inclusion (e.g. link success in inclusion to performance evaluations)
- Human resource policies: equity and cultural competencies are evaluated in hiring, performance appraisals, promotions, succession planning
- Targets and timelines set for hiring/promotion of underrepresented groups with managers held accountable, track progress
- Employee communications to promote inclusion, benefits to everyone, what is expected of everyone
- Support development of staff
- Mandatory training for all staff
- Complaint process

The Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) has launched a number of initiatives aimed at integrating immigrants into the workplace, including on-line resources for employers, mentorship programs, and a range of recruitment and retention ideas for employers.

Several tools were shared, including diversity assessment questionnaires, employee engagement strategies, promotion and awareness building, staff training methods, and others.

## **F. Individual Actions and Supports**

Although systemic and workplace-wide interventions are fundamental, there is also a role for individual action. In many cases of workplace violence, the actions of co-workers can be instrumental in preventing an escalation of the violence, in supporting the victim and in creating an environment of respect, safety and inclusion.

Neighbours, Friends and Families at Work (NFF at Work) and It's Everybody's Business are two examples of community-based campaigns aimed at engaging businesses in addressing domestic violence in the workplace. The premise behind these types of campaigns is that most people would do something, if they knew what to do. Although bystander interventions are key, most people do not know what to do, and so they hesitate. Providing appropriate information, resources and training gives them the opportunity to understand possible interventions, and to practice actually doing them.

NFF at Work involves three stages: introducing the campaign and materials through an electronic message from a high level authority in the workplace; providing a one-hour educational and in-depth sustainability training to transfer skills and knowledge to internal representatives of the workplace.

Many of the workplace education campaigns on domestic violence, both in Canada and the United States, emphasize two elements: critical events, and opportunities. Critical events are visible warning signs and risk factors that co-workers can notice, if they are attentive, and raise the possibility of danger. Opportunities are a chance for a co-worker to intervene helpfully. These can be missed because people are unprepared or do not know what to do, and because there are insufficient supports in the workplace to enable an appropriate response to these situations.

In situations where employers are not engaged in preventing and addressing workplace violence, community agencies and others need to take steps to provide support to individuals workers. This is particularly important in situations where workers are more vulnerable to harassment and violence in the workplace, due to their immigration status, race, religion, precariousness of their work or other factors.

METRAC, a non-profit agency based in Toronto, launched their Workplace Justice series of booklets for women who are particularly vulnerable to violence and harassment, including migrant workers and live-in caregivers. Their dependent and temporary worker status puts them at risk of unfair treatment and abuse by their employers, and also makes it less likely that they will complain, leave or report the abuse, for fear of losing their job and losing the opportunity to gain permanent resident status. These women also face additional linguistic and cultural barriers, and rarely have access to information about their rights and workplace protections in Canada. Their situation is often compounded by unequal pay, health and environmental hazards, and poor living conditions.

The METRAC booklets try to redress this imbalance by providing women with basic information about their rights and avenues for redress, including tips for dealing with

workplace bullying and sexual harassment and developing a safety plan in the event of sexual or physical assault. The booklets are in a format that is both accessible and discrete: they are small enough to be easily and quickly hidden, and have deceptively innocuous flower designs on their covers.

Specific booklets have been developed for temp agency workers, women domestic workers and live-in caregivers, women health care workers, women migrant farm workers, and exotic dancers.

“Missed Opportunities”, an interactive Forum Theatre play, is designed to engage audiences in identifying opportunities for friends and co-workers to intervene constructively in domestic violence situations. The play was performed during the conference, and members of the audience were invited to step into the role of one of the actors (other than the perpetrator) to re-write the script and change the outcome.

The idea running through these diverse initiatives is that individual actions can make a difference. Caring about the people around us and paying attention to them is a radical act; even small actions can have an impact.

## **G. Conclusion**

The concluding presentation by Dr. Sandy Welsh offered insights from academic research on workplace violence, bullying, sexual harassment and domestic violence. She reminded us that harassment and violence at work are organizational issues, not interpersonal problems. Hostile and demeaning behaviours signal that an individual or group is not welcome and/or is a competitive threat in the workplace. Harassment and violence are organizational issues that are more likely to occur in certain contexts where there is job insecurity; gender, racialized and other workforce power differences and/or a lack of organizational competence and coherence.

Organizational coherence diminishes the risk of violence by providing transparency, thereby increasing the likelihood violent behaviour will be visible to all; accountability, thereby increasing the likelihood that behaviour of “bullies” or harassers will rebound badly on the abuser and capacity, thereby ensuring an organizational ability to motivate and control employees through visible rules and rewards.

The most common options for preventing workplace violence and harassment are having policies and procedures in place, providing education and training to all employees, providing appropriate referrals when in-house expertise is limited and creating a responsive workplace culture.

There is research evidence that some strategies do work to prevent violence and harassment. These include having a supportive organizational leadership and culture; reducing gender, racialized and other inequalities across workgroups and the reduction of interpersonal competition and job insecurity (or at a minimum – recognizing their effects); having proactive policies and procedures; providing concrete evidence of supportive organizational leadership and culture and implementing clear procedures to encourage reporting.

Zero-tolerance policies are an example of practices that sound great on paper but prove to be less useful in practice. Targets of violence and harassment view these as less effective than non-victims (Leck and Galperin 2006). This includes modified zero tolerance policies which address the threat of violence as well as actual violence. These policies have the potential to squelch early incident disclosure. Targets of harassment and domestic violence don't report or disclose to co-workers and supervisors for a list of reasons including fear of retaliation; fear of losing one's job; the need for a reference; lack of information about their options; the impression that their complaint is not "serious" enough to warrant an outside investigation; fear of not being believed and lack of family support for reporting.

Education and training doesn't always work as planned. There is weak evidence of a long-term preventative effect for sexual harassment training. It is most useful for helping to identify behaviours. Men who have had sexual harassment training have been shown to be more willing to blame the victim.

Training/educating workers to be "bully-proof" by not ignoring harassment and violence and developing behavioural strategies to push back earlier may be more effective. A supportive workplace culture and leadership is a necessary component of successful implementation.

Bystander interventions such as supporting co-workers and intervening in harassment can be effective because harassment less likely in presence of "guardians". Workplace programs directed to co-workers or bystanders, such as Neighbours, Friends and Families@Work are just being introduced now to workplaces.

What we really know about effective workplace violence and harassment prevention can be summarized in three succinct points:

- Employers have a role and responsibility,
- Leadership and organizational culture are key,
- Policies are necessary but only the first step.

The conference covered a wide scope of issues and perspectives on the question of workplace violence. It provided those who attended with practical tools, conceptual overviews and new perspectives on several different aspects of the issue. However, the information and practices gathered were only part of the benefit to those who were there. The energy of ideas circulating, the passion of the speakers, and the inspiration from Anita Hill and many of the other presenters made the experience that much richer and its impact enduring.

## **Appendix A: Agenda and Presenters for the Conference**

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### **Opening**

Gloria Mulcahy, "Indigenous Greeting"

### **Plenary 1: The Personal Costs of Unsafe, Disrespectful and Harassing Workplace Behaviour**

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Hazel J. Magnussen, BScN, MTS: Author of *A Doctor's Calling: a matter of conscience*, a book that addresses the difficult challenges associated with identifying and managing disruptive behaviour among physicians. Magnussen wrote the book after her brother, Dr. Dr. Doug Snider was murdered by a physician colleague

Sharon Scrimshaw, Successful Workplace Litigant & Women's Advocate

Yvonne Seguin, Director, Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec Inc.

Bonnie Robichaud, Litigant in 1987 Supreme Court of Canada decision defining employer responsibility for acts of discrimination

### **Plenary 2: Standards and Stakeholders for Creating and Maintaining Safe and Respectful Workplaces**

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Michael Lynk, LLB, LLM, Professor and Associate Dean (Academic), Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario

Joanne St-Lewis, BA, LLB, Assistant Professor of Law at the University of Ottawa, Founding Director of the Education Equity Programme of the Law Faculty at the University of Ottawa

Catherine Burr, MIR, Research Associate, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, Trainer, university instructor, management coach, Workplace Consultant

### **Lunch Plenary: The Dupont Inquest: from Recommendations to Implementation**

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Dr. Peter Jaffe, Academic Director, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children

Mary Benson-Albers, BA (Hon), Director, Human Resources, Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital

### **Series A Workshops**

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#### **Union Initiatives & Challenges in Creating Safe Respectful & Inclusive Workplaces**

Sari Sairanen, Director of the Health and Safety Department for the CAW/TCA  
Bridget Pridham, CUPE National Representative

#### **Workplace Violence Prevention for Small & Medium Businesses**

Maureen C. Shaw, President & CEO, Industrial Accident Prevention Association

Andrew Harkness CHSC, DOHS, Senior Strategy Advisor  
Healthy Workplaces

Industrial Accident Prevention Association

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## **A Relational Approach to Preventing & Responding to Gendered Workplace Violence**

Mandy Bonisteel, Respect-at-Work trainer  
Coordinator, Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program, George Brown College  
Dr. Jennifer Nedelsky, Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Toronto

## **The Impact of Trauma in the Workplace: Addressing Mental Health & Addiction**

Dr. Ruth Lanius, Harris-Woodman Chair in Psyche and Soma, Department of Psychiatry at Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, University of Western Ontario  
Jo MacQuarrie, RN, Métis Elder & Mental Health Consultant for the Métis Nation of Ontario

## **Community Advocacy from the Ground Up: Experiences of Women Organizing after the Workplace Deaths of Theresa Vince & Lori Dupont**

Michelle Schryer, Executive Director, Chatham Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre & Member of The Windsor Inquest Action Group  
Catherine Kedziora, Daughter of Theresa Vince  
Pat Noonan, Member of The Windsor Inquest Action Group  
Joy Hamilton, Member of The Windsor Inquest Action Group  
Joy Lang, Community Liaison Officer, Centre for Research & Education on Violence against Women & Children

## **Where Human Rights Intersect with Workplace Bullying & Violence**

Archana Mary Mathew, BA; LLB, Equity Officer, OPSEU  
Susan Nickle, BA, LLB, Lawyer, Wortzman Nickle Professional Corporation

## **Series B Workshops**

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### **Management and Labour Working Together to Create Safe & Respectful Workplaces**

Silvia Olcsvary, BA, Manager Organizational Development, Electro-Motive Canada  
Julie White, Director of Women's Programs, CAW/TCA  
Susan Houston, National Employment Equity Co-ordinator, CAW/TCA

### **Canadian Workplace Initiatives to Address Domestic Violence/ Woman Abuse**

Margaret MacPherson, MA/Eric Magni, MSc, Neighbours, Friends and Families@Work Trainers  
Susan Speck, MA, Project Coordinator,  
Stop Family Violence it's everybody's business

### **Investigating Workplace Bullying**

Catherine Burr, MIR, Research Associate, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children  
Barbara Humphrey, LLB, Partner, Stringer, Brisbin and Humphrey

### **Preventing & Addressing Violence against Marginalized Workers \*Official Launch**

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### **of New Workplace Resources\***

Zahra Dhanani, LLB, LLM(c), Legal Director, Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)  
Evelyn Encalada, BA (Hon), MA, Justicia for Migrant Workers  
Michelle Schryer, Chatham-Kent Sexual Assault Crisis Centre  
Coco Diaz, Advocacy for Live-in Caregivers

### **Educational Institutions as Workplaces With the documentary “Voices of Diversity: Creating a culture of safety, respect and belonging on campus”**

Dr. Alison Konrad, Professor of Organizational Behavior, Corus Entertainment Chair in Women in Management, Ivey School of Business, UWO & Workplace Diversity Trainer  
Dr. Bonnie MacLachlan, Associate Professor & Graduate Chair, Department of Classical Studies, UWO & Member of the Video Production Committee

### **Voices of Exclusion: Experiences of staff in Toronto teaching hospital**

Marilyn Kanee, Camala Day, Diane Savage, Paula Stewart  
Mount Sinai Hospital's Diversity and Human Rights Committee

### **Keynote Dinner Address by Anita Hill**

Introduction by Professor Constance Backhouse

### **Plenary 3: From Marginalization to Genuine Collaboration: Becoming an Ally**

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Pauline Shirt, Elder, Plains Cree, Red-Tail Hawk Clan

Mihad Famy, LLB, LLM, Labour and Human Rights Lawyer and Human Rights Adviser to the Canadian Council on American Islamic Relations – Canada (CAIR CAN)

M. David Lepofsky, CMO, LLB, LLM, LLD, Chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance

Zahra Dhanani, LLB, LLB (c), Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children

### **Series C Workshops**

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#### **Workplace Diversity Initiatives**

Dr. Alison Konrad, Professor of Organizational Behavior, Corus Entertainment Chair in Women in Management, Ivey School of Business & Workplace Diversity Trainer  
Sergeant Keith Hendricks, Diversity Management Unit, Toronto Police Service

#### **Corporate Best Practice for Addressing Domestic Violence/ Woman Abuse in the Workplace: The American Experience**

Bob Kieckhefer, Corporate VP of public affairs for Health Care Service Corporation Chicago, Board member of the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence, Board member of the Illinois Violence Prevention Authority

#### **Community Organizing Strategies: What You Can Learn from the Disabilities Community**

M. David Lepofsky, CMO, LLB, LLM, LLD, Chair of the Accessibility for Ontarians with

Disabilities Act Alliance

**The Vision & the Reality of the AODA for Women with DisAbilities**

Marianne Park, MA, Consultant on Violence against Women & DisAbility Issues

**The Range of Informal Measures to Address Bullying in the Workplace: Early Identification & Early Intervention Strategies**

Marilyn Noble, BA, BFA, MEd, Adult Educator, Sessional instructor  
University of New Brunswick  
Dr. Judy MacIntosh, Professor, Faculty of Nursing, University of  
New Brunswick

**The Experience of Aboriginal People in the Workplace**

Michelle Sault, BA, BEd, Principle Consultant for Cornerstone Concepts, an Aboriginal owned consulting company with focus in the areas of program development, governance, leadership training and evaluation

**What Can I Do? A Session to Ask Questions about Difficult Workplace Situations**

Geri Sanson, BA, LLB, LSM, Human Rights, Labour and Employment Law Lawyer, Workplace Mediator, Investigator, Facilitator and Adjudicator, Sanson Law Office  
Catherine Burr, MIR, Research Associate, Centre for Research and Education on Violence against Women and Children, Workplace Consultant  
Yvonne Seguin, Director, Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec Inc.

**Lunch Theatre: Domestic Violence Spillover into the Workplace**

Interactive theatre play "Missed Opportunities" to explore interventions in a situation of woman abuse

**Series D Workshops**

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**Evolving legal standards for employers: regulation and compliance**

Mark Hart, BA, MA, LLB, Vice Chair, Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario  
John Vanderdoelen, Director of Health and Safety Policy Branch,  
Ministry of Labour

**Collaborating with Community Experts to Develop a Workplace Violence Prevention Program**

Jeff Fielding, BA, MA, CAO, City of London  
Mandy Bonisteel, Respect-at-Work trainer Coordinator, Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Program, George Brown College  
Shelley Yeo, Developer of Woman Abuse Training for the Workplace & Manager Second Stage Housing  
Louise Pitre, BSc, MHA, Developer of Woman Abuse Training for the Workplace & Executive Director, Sexual Assault Centre London  
Saundra Lynn Coulter, Developer of Woman Abuse Training for the Workplace & Program Manager, London Abused Women's Centre

**Threat Assessment and Risk Management in the Workplace**

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Jim Van Allen, Criminal Profiler, President, Behaviour Science Solutions Group Inc.

Tracey Marshall, Manager of Student Rights and Responsibilities Former Sergeant, Durham Regional Police Service & Workplace Risk Assessment Expert, Durham College and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Moderator: Elgin Austen, Retired Deputy Chief of Operations, London Police Service, Director of Campus Community Police Service, Security and violence prevention specialist

### **Best Practices for Fostering Healthy Work Environments for Health Care Professionals**

Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN, President, Ontario Nurses Association

Karen Ellis-Scharfenberg RN., BScN., MBA., Associate Director, RNAO Centre for Professional Nursing Excellence

### **Practical Strategies for Integrating Skilled Immigrants into our Workforce**

Rodel Imbarlina-Ramos, Manager, Corporate & Stakeholder Relations, Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC)

### **Atelier en français portant sur le harcèlement sexuel et psy-**

**chologique au travail (Workshop in French on sexual and psychological harassment.)**

Jennifer Boucher, Criminologue, Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec Inc.

Cindy Viau, Relationniste, Groupe d'aide et d'information sur le harcèlement sexuel au travail de la province de Québec Inc.

### **Plenary 4: From Harassment to Domestic Violence in the Workplace: What Have We Learned about Opportunities for Prevention?**

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Dr. Sandy Welsh, Professor and Associate Chair – Graduate Studies, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto

Dennis Butler, BA, MBA, SPHR, Consultant, Former Vice President, Workplace Solutions, Liz Claiborne Inc.

Geri Sanson, B.A., L.L.B., L.S.M., Human Rights, Labour and Employment Law Lawyer, Workplace Mediator, Investigator, Facilitator and Adjudicator, SANSON LAW OFFICE

## **Appendix B: Conference Committee**

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### **Co-Chairs**

Barb MacQuarrie  
Catherine Burr

### **Members**

Carol Agocs  
Mary Harron  
Eric Magni  
Kinga Pozniak  
Birgit Prodingler  
Mary Ann Smith

### **Administrative Support**

Maria Callaghan  
Joy Lang  
Lina Rodriguez

## Appendix C: Websites of Interest

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Neighbours, Friends and Families

[www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca](http://www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca)

[www.kanawayhitowin.ca](http://www.kanawayhitowin.ca)

[www.voisinsamisetsfamilles.ca](http://www.voisinsamisetsfamilles.ca)

Love is Not Abuse

[www.loveisnotabuse.com](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com)

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

[www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)

Safe at Work Coalition

[www.safeatworkcoalition.org](http://www.safeatworkcoalition.org)

Illinois Public Health Institute

[www.iphionline.org](http://www.iphionline.org)

Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

[www.caepv.org](http://www.caepv.org)

Illinois Violence Prevention Authority

[www.ivpa.org](http://www.ivpa.org)

The Evaluation Resource Institute in Illinois provides the violence prevention community in Illinois with the education, tools, resources and expertise to design and implement effective program evaluations. (established by IVPA and others)

Stop Family Violence. It's Everybody's Business. Niagara region

[www.itseverybodysbusiness.ca](http://www.itseverybodysbusiness.ca)

Hire Immigrants.ca Roadmap

[www.hireimmigrants.ca/roadmap](http://www.hireimmigrants.ca/roadmap)

Towards a Respectful Workplace

[www.unbf.ca/towardarespectfulworkplace/](http://www.unbf.ca/towardarespectfulworkplace/)

Respect-at-Work

[www.respect-at-work.com](http://www.respect-at-work.com)