

NIDMAR Celebrates 25 Years



L to R: MP Gord Johns, Wolfgang Zimmermann, Minister Shane Simpson



L to R: Founding and current Co-Chairs Peter Lawrie, Dean Winsor, Wolfgang Zimmermann, Ken Neumann, Brian Payne



Lani deHek (BCNU) speaking to the success of the EDMP

A celebration was held in December to mark a significant milestone in the development of advanced standards in Return to Work / Disability Management policies, programs and practices.

In October 1994, the National Institute of Disability Management and Research (NIDMAR) officially opened the doors to its offices located at the new North Island College campus in Port Alberni, BC.

The vision of NIDMAR being an innovator, thought leader and catalyst for best practice outcomes in more effective Return to Work for disabled workers who acquired a mental or physical health impairment while employed and at risk of losing their attachment to the workforce was driven by a collective group of senior leaders from the employer, labour, provincial and federal governments, and workers compensation communities from across the country.

Through the effective collaboration of the Employer Co-Chair Peter Lawrie (who was Director of Industrial Relations for MacMillan Bloedel) and the Labour Co-Chair Brian Payne (who was Western Canadian Vice President of the Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union) inspired many others to participate, raising a supporting endowment and steered the path towards leading edge Disability Management educational, professional, and program development.

In the intervening 25 years, this level of collaboration not only continued but expanded with new leaders joining the common mission and contributing towards the success of various initiatives that were under way or envisioned. Highlights of developments are as follows:

- Establishment of the Pacific Coast University for Workplace Health Sciences (PCU-WHS) as a statutory, not-for-profit, post-secondary, degree granting education and research institution via private legislation and with the unanimous support of all Members of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.
- Development, validation, and promotion of Occupational Standards and associated professional certification examinations in Return to Work and Disability Management, which have now been adopted in 64 countries worldwide and are referenced in the ISSA global best practice guidelines on Return to Work and Reintegration.
- Developed, tested and introduced a three-level consensus-based Return to Work / Disability Management program assessment protocol whose effective utilization formed the basis of the highly regarded Enhanced Disability Management Program (EDMP) which covers more than 150,000 workers across four unions and more than 200 employers in BC's health care sector through collective agreement language which embeds best practices from the assessment protocol.
- Launched in 2002, the International Forum on Disability Management, with IFDM 2002 hosted by NIDMAR in Vancouver with the support of key Ministers from around the world as well as employer, union, workers compensation and other stakeholder



leaders who successfully launched a biennial congress dedicated to profiling best RTW / DM practices, emerging research and innovative statutory developments. Following Vancouver, the IFDM went on to be hosted in Maastricht, Brisbane, Berlin, Los Angeles, London, Melbourne, Kuala Lumpur, and returned to Vancouver in 2018 hosted by PCU-WHS. IFDM 2020 is scheduled for Brussels, in Berlin in 2022, and starting in 2024 it will be organized through the International Social Security Association (ISSA), a UN affiliated agency located in Geneva.

The anniversary event reflected on the past 25 years featuring many national and international guests. It was opened by the founding Co-Chairs with closing comments by the current Co-Chairs, Dean Winsor, Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Teck Resources and Ken Neumann, National Director for the United Steelworkers.

Keynote speaker for the event was the Honorable Shane Simpson, BC Minister for Social Development and Poverty Reduction who, in his remarks, reflected on public consultations that took place this fall in preparation for the introduction of BC's first Accessibility legislation which he intends to introduce in the fall of 2020. Minister Simpson reflected, "The range of supports, opportunities and rights that persons with disabilities deserve is broad and diverse. The work of NIDMAR and the University is an important piece. It was great to join you for this great celebration."

Minister Simpson was joined by a Special Guest, the recently re-elected Federal Member of Parliament for Courtney-Alberni, Gord Johns, who played an instrumental role in encouraging Veterans Affairs Canada in supporting 25 Veterans to undertake the 25-module continuing education Disability Management Practitioner Program in preparation for entering this rapidly expanding career field. And, with an additional 25 Veterans on the waiting list, Mr. Johns is actively exploring opportunities on how they could be supported.

Of significant interest to all participants were presentations on international developments from Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom and ISSA, with special greetings from our colleagues in Malaysia and Hong Kong.

On a final note, Minister Simpson also extended special greetings from Minister Scott Fraser, MLA for the riding of Mid Island – Alberni where the University and NIDMAR are located and who was prevented from attending due to flight cancellations because of poor weather conditions.

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