2025 MAMINGWEY BURN SURVIVOR CONFERENCE RECAP

OVERVIEW

The Mamingwey Burn Society Inc. held a successful in-person conference on October 24-25, 2025, at the Canad Inns Polo Park Hotel in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The day-and-a-half event welcomed over 75 attendees, including many familiar faces and several first-time participants. This year's conference theme, "The Life You Want, The Strength You Have," inspired meaningful discussions, heartfelt stories, and valuable learning opportunities for burn survivors, families, and professionals alike.

The conference commenced with a keynote address delivered by Ben Harms, titled *"Finding Strength: When Life Knocks You Off Your Feet"* In his presentation, Ben reflected on his accident and subsequent hospitalization, outlining the unique challenges and setbacks he encountered as a burn survivor and double amputee. His candid account of resilience and recovery offered a compelling message of perseverance and hope that resonated strongly with all in attendance.

Leslie Kostycz shared valuable insights on financial planning after injury with her talk on *"Financial First Aid: Tips for Life After Injury"*. Attendees found her insights on the Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) particularly helpful on how it can support long-term financial security.

Jared Funk, from the Accessible Sport Connection, spoke about the importance of inclusive sports and recreation for individuals with disabilities. He encouraged participants to explore new activities and highlighted the resources and support available to overcome barriers and stay active in their communities.

On the second day of the conference, Ben Harms returned to the stage with his presentation, *"Embracing the Journey: Life After Burns"*. He reflected on the stages of healing he experienced on his path to acceptance, emphasizing the importance of beginning with inner recovery. Ben also shared practical strategies for managing negative and intrusive thoughts, including his personal "two bad day rule," which encourages self-compassion and resilience during difficult times.

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Ryan Anderson, a Performance Life Coach with Motiv8 Coaching and Mortgage Consultant with Castle Mortgage Group, presented on “Understanding Your Self-Image.” His talk emphasized cultivating self-awareness, confidence, and resilience.

Dr. Maxine Holmqvist and Dr. Anne Tseu delivered a session on “Sleep.” With over a decade of experience treating sleep disorders, Dr. Holmqvist highlighted evidence-based approaches for assessing and managing sleep challenges, as well as sharing strategies for improving sleep and its role in overall health.

A moderated panel featuring a burn survivor, a retired firefighter, a burn survivor firefighter, and his spouse was a highlight of the conference. Each panelist shared their unique experiences and perspectives, offering personal insights into resilience, recovery, and what strength truly means in the context of life after trauma.

Sharing circles were held for burn survivors, family members and friends, and health care professionals, providing a supportive space for reflection and connection. Highlights from past conferences and the 2025 Burn Camp Phoenix and Family Camp were on display.

This conference would not have been possible without the dedication of our tireless volunteers, the generosity of our sponsors, and the participation of all those who attended. We look forward to coming together again next year for more sharing, learning, and healing.

For more information about the conference or the Mamingwey Burn Society, please contact Hon Ha O'Donovan at honha@mamingwey.ca or visit www.mamingwey.ca.