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Creative CoLab launches Speaker Series with discussion on tattoos in the workplace

Assiniboine College welcomes workplace researcher, Dr. Alyssa Grocutt, for a conversation on workplace perceptions of tattoos in modern work environments.

BRANDON, Man. (November 23, 2026)— Assiniboine College's Creative CoLab is launching a Speaker Series to bring thought leaders and emerging ideas to the college and broader community. The inaugural event today (Monday) features workplace researcher Dr. Alyssa Grocutt, whose presentations explored tattoos, workplace perceptions and authenticity in modern work environments.

For Michael Lamb, instructor in Assiniboine's Centre for Creative Media and CoLab contributor, the speaker series is a natural extension of the Creative CoLab's mission to connect students with industry while creating meaningful conversations that extend beyond the classroom.

"We want to create opportunities for the community and for students to engage with each other and with the CoLab, through insightful and interesting conversations," said Lamb.

The series is intended to help strengthen relationships between students, employers, entrepreneurs and creative professionals.

"The more voices students are able to hear from and the more people they're able to see and connect with in industry, the better opportunities it creates for everyone," Lamb said. "We have things like practicums and work-integrated learning already, but this creates another way for those interactions and connections to happen."

The Creative CoLab was designed as a shared space where students, businesses and community members can learn from one another while exploring new ideas and technologies. Lamb believes those kinds of informal connections can have a lasting impact on both the region's workforce and creative economy.

"At its core, it is an economic development project, and we're trying to build the greater creative economy here in western Manitoba," he said. "We want to have a hub for creative people to meet. When students, entrepreneurs, business owners and community members are all working in the same space, that's where new ideas and opportunities can flourish."

The first session in the series will tackle a topic that continues to generate discussion across industries, hosted by Dr. Alyssa Grocutt, a Postdoctoral Associate at Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary. Dr. Grocutt earned her PhD in Organizational Behaviour at the Smith School of Business, Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario.

"While tattoos can be considered common, they're still not a norm, especially visible tattoos," said Grocutt. "Approximately one in three Canadians have one or more tattoos, and about 70 per cent say their tattoos usually aren't visible."

Grocutt's research examines how tattooed employees are viewed by employers, coworkers and customers, and challenges assumptions that visible tattoos negatively affect customer experiences. "One misconception is that customers will be uncomfortable with tattooed employees," she said. "In many cases, customers are quite accepting of tattooed employees."

Her work also highlights the connection between authenticity and employee wellbeing, suggesting that workplace policies around appearance may have broader implications for organizations. "Authenticity is more beneficial than detrimental," said Grocutt. "Tattooed people often say they feel more like themselves with their tattoos, and we know from research that when employees feel more authentic, their productivity and wellbeing are higher."

On Monday, Dr. Grocutt will deliver two presentations at the Creative CoLab. An afternoon session at 1:00 p.m. for students, focusing on tattoos and mental health, and a public presentation in the evening (6 p.m.) that explores tattoos in the workplace and invited discussion among employers, human resource professionals, tattoo artists and community members.

For Lamb, opening those conversations to a wider audience is exactly what the CoLab hopes to accomplish.

"We often bring speakers in to talk to a class of 20 students," he said. "This is an opportunity to open those doors to the entire college and the broader community."

Grocutt says she is honoured to help launch what organizers hope will become a regular platform for learning, discussion and industry engagement.

"I am absolutely honoured to be the first speaker in this series," she said. "I love getting to share research with more people and connect with others on this topic, and I'm looking forward to seeing what's to come with this series."

The Creative CoLab Speaker Series is open to students, industry professionals and members of the public. Information about the event and future speaker series programming is available through Assiniboine College's Creative Collab website here.

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About Assiniboine College

Assiniboine College has been providing exceptional learning experiences for more than 65 years, offering unparalleled learning environments and responding to the demands and requirements of the Manitoba labour market. Following the philosophy of "learn by doing," programs combine theory with hands-on learning inside classrooms, labs, kitchens, shops, fields, and the college's Sustainable Greenhouse.

Assiniboine offers more than 60 certificate, diploma and post-graduate programs across a variety of disciplines including culinary arts and hospitality, business, agriculture and environment, health and human services, and trades and technology. The college also delivers apprenticeship programming in a range of skilled trades disciplines.

The college welcomed more than 11,000 students last year. With campuses in Brandon, Dauphin, Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie, Assiniboine provides comprehensive educational opportunities throughout Manitoba. The college also partners with many communities and organizations across the province to deliver customized education and training. Assiniboine's annual provincial economic impact is $612 million. In the most recent survey of graduates, nine months after graduation, 94 per cent were employed, with 94 per cent remaining in Manitoba.

Assiniboine College campuses are located on the traditional territories of Treaty No. 1 and Treaty No. 2, the shared traditional lands of Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, Dene and Anishinabek/Ojibwe peoples, and the homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge their welcome to the students who seek knowledge here.

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