

# NS GRIEF ALLIANCE PROVINCIAL SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY

## Symposium Theme:

**COMPASSION IN ACTION**

**Date & Location:** November 18, 2025 | Old Orchard Inn

**Attendance:** Approximately 140 participants

The Nova Scotia Grief Alliance hosted its first province-wide symposium, bringing together diverse voices to learn, share, and strengthen connections in grief support.

## ➔ Agenda

**Keynote:** *Andrea Currie – Medicine Stories: Travels Through the Landscape of Grief*

**Panel Discussion:** *Compassion in Action – Insights into Grief Provincially & Nationally*

- Paulina Meader – Health Director / Primary Care LPN, Wije'winen Health Centre
- Lindsay Sutherland – Director, Policy & Planning (Grief & Bereavement), Palliative Care Network, Nova Scotia Health
- Dr. MaryEllen Macdonald, PhD – Co-director, GriefMatters.ca
- Paul Adams – Canadian Grief Alliance
- Sarah Scott – Spiritual Health Clinician, Valley Hospice

Panelists shared national and local perspectives on compassion in action and emerging grief needs. Participants actively contributed through questions and shared experiences.



Andrea Currie, Keynote Speaker



*“The guests were wonderful, a real community of caring people lifted me higher and gave me hope.” – Symposium Attendee*

*“Coming from a small community, I am so happy to be able to follow the Grief Alliance as a great resource.” – Symposium Attendee*



## Breakout Workshops

- Community Grief Supports: Paul O'Hara, MSW, SWC
- Newcomer & Immigrant Perspectives: Colleen Belle, Coordinator, Welcoming Communities, Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia
- Grief in Schools: Emilie Smith, MSW, RSW, SchoolsPlus Facilitator

## Additional Opportunities

Networking sessions, resource tables, and interactive discussions supported peer connection and collaboration.



## ➔ Attendant Feedback - Key Themes

### Connection & Community:

- Sharing stories, experiences, and fostering a caring network was highly valued.
- Participants from smaller communities appreciated access to this provincial resource.

### Keynote & Presentations:

- Andrea Currie's keynote widely praised for storytelling, poetry, and cultural insight.
- Panel discussions offered multiple perspectives, including Indigenous traditions.

### Resources & Environment:

- Resource tables and booths provided helpful information.
- The event atmosphere, including food and hospitality, was warmly received.

### Areas for Improvement:

- Ensure high quality audio throughout the day for future events.
- Desire to include practical, skills-based training and workshops in symposium offerings.
- A wide range of grief related topics were suggested for future events, reflecting diverse needs.
- Desire for more networking opportunities at the symposium to connect those working in grief.

### Suggestions for Future Topics:

- Somatic movement for grief.
- Grief in marginalized communities ("grief under oppression").
- Disenfranchised and anticipatory grief.
- Storytelling and interactive provider connections.
- Ritual, ceremony, mental health, and addictions.
- The intersection of grief with trauma, mental health, poverty, and social challenges.



Attendees represented urban, rural and regional communities from across Nova Scotia, reflecting broad participation from clinicians, hospice staff, volunteers and community organizations, and demonstrating the NSGA's province-wide reach and commitment to connection across diverse communities.

### Looking Ahead

The symposium marked the first province wide opportunity to bring together diverse voices in grief support. Attendees expressed hope it becomes an annual gathering, continuing to grow and bring together those serving communities across Nova Scotia.