

# Nova Scotia Grief Alliance

# EASTERN REGION

# ROUNDTABLE

## What We Heard Summary

The Nova Scotia Grief Alliance (NSGA) held its first of five regional in-person roundtables. Led by Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association (NSHPCA), the NSGA hosts regional roundtables to bring together individuals and organizations involved in grief support. Roundtables provide space for those working in grief support locally to hear about grief initiatives in their area, learn about NSGA, and share insights on grief needs and opportunities.

### Eastern Region Roundtable Summary



#### Who Attended

**25** Community members, from Sydney to Antigonish.

**5** Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Care Association & Nova Scotia Health leaders.

#### Participants from a range of sectors attended, including:

- Community-based grief support.
- Health care professionals and social workers.
- Municipal staff.
- Non-profit organizations.
- Students.
- Volunteers.



#### Key Activities

- Nova Scotia Grief Alliance overview.
- Panel discussion.
- Presentation and small group discussion on local community grief needs and opportunities.

**The group engaged with panel presenters and contributed to panel discussions with their own experiences, perspectives, and questions. Panel presenters were:**

- Kuli Malhotra – Project Lead, Bereaved Families of NS.
- Kim Popwell – Hospice Palliative Care Service Bereavement Co-Ordinator, Nova Scotia Health.
- Meaghan Jackson – Certified Music Therapist/Registered Counselling Therapist Candidate.
- Stephen Anthony – Vice Chair, Strait Richmond Palliative Care Society.

Photo credit: Warwick Yang

# WHAT WE HEARD – NOVA SCOTIA GRIEF ALLIANCE EASTERN REGION ROUNDTABLE

## Small Group Discussion:

Kristian Suen, Community Relations and Research Lead for NSHPCA, led a community needs sharing and learning session to discuss grief-related needs, challenges, and strengths in the Eastern Region.

## Top Themes: Needs:

### Themes from small group discussions on grief-related needs and challenges in the Eastern Region:

- Culturally safe and accessible grief supports and services.
- Inconsistent funding for non-profits that provide grief support.
- Long waitlists for mental health support impact demand on grief services for traumatic and complicated grief cases.
- More training is needed for frontline workers to build grief literacy, and grief facilitators for designing and delivering grief programs.
- Need to de-medicalize and de-pathologize grief.
- Rural isolation and lack of local services.
- Social determinants of health – unmet needs impact access to supportive services and programs.
- Support needed for those delivering grief services who are at risk of burnout.
- Need for a **National Bereavement Strategy.**



## DID YOU KNOW?

The Canadian Grief Alliance recently released a **National Strategic Approach to Grief Literacy and Support** in Canada. View their Next Steps Action Plan [here](#).

## Top Themes: Strengths:

### Themes from small group discussions on grief-related strengths in the Eastern Region:

- Conversations about grief are growing in community.
- Community-based non-profits, volunteers, and professionals are stepping up to lead grief work.
- Growing community awareness of grief and bereavement needs.
- Government is recognizing importance of supporting grief work.
- Increased collaboration and momentum among organizations.
- Longstanding organizations in the Eastern region have been supporting grievers in the region for many years and understand the needs of Eastern region communities.
- Positive impact of Healing Pathways funding and other funding directed at supporting grief programs and services.

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## Evaluation:

Most participants who completed the evaluation survey rated the event as good or excellent, and agreed or strongly agreed that:

- Content met participant expectations.
- Panelists were engaging.
- Topics discussed were relevant.
- There were sufficient opportunities for discussion.

## Key recommendations from participants:

Participants brought forward their suggestions for future Grief Alliance speakers and topics, and also provided recommendations for future Grief Alliance events.

### Common topic suggestions:

- Disenfranchised/marginalized grief.
- Emerging grief research.
- Perinatal loss and grief.

### Recommendations for future events:

- Incorporate more time for participant introductions, networking and discussion.
- Consider audio/visual supports for future roundtables to ensure participants can hear speakers and participate fully in the day's agenda.

You Created a Safe Space for Everyone's voices/ Great Engagement. Loved the Panel presenters. Big heartfelt thank you.

We need more time, I feel like we just scratched the surface.

## Next Steps:

- Planning is underway to hold in-person roundtable events in the Central, Northern, and Western regions in the fall.
- Based on feedback from the Eastern region roundtable, future in-person roundtables will include more time for group discussions and networking.
- Themes collected on needs and strengths will be incorporated into a province-wide needs assessment. The final document will be shared with Grief Alliance members.
- Future grief alliance offerings (i.e. webinars and speakers) will be based on suggestions from Grief Alliance participants.

## Useful Links:

Nova Scotia Grief Alliance [website](#) | Canadian Grief Alliance [website](#) | Canadian Grief Alliance National Strategy – [Next Steps and Action Plan](#) | Healing Pathways [grant funding](#)  
Healing Pathways – [Grieving Well](#) | Nova Scotia Health [Life Changes](#)