

Nova Scotia Grief Alliance

WESTERN REGION

ROUNDTABLE

What We Heard Summary

On Friday, October 3, the Nova Scotia Grief Alliance (NSGA) held its fourth regional in-person roundtable. 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.

Western Region Roundtable Summary



Who Attended

22

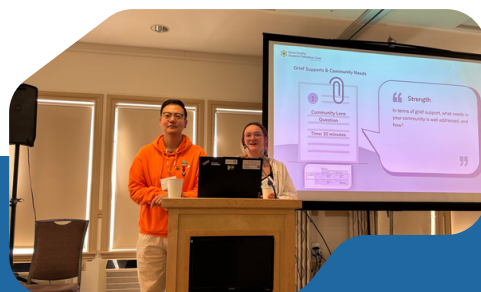
Community members, from from Clare, Kentville, and Mahone Bay

6

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

Participants from a range of sectors attended, including:

- Community-based grief support, grief educators, health care and school-based professionals, clergy, non-profit organizations, volunteers, researchers, and hospice societies.



Key Activities

- Nova Scotia Grief Alliance overview.
- Guest Speaker.
- Panel discussion.
- Presentation and small group discussion on local community grief needs, opportunities and educational needs for those working in grief.

Guest Speaker

Angela Blenkhorne – Bernie's Buddies, Founder and Chair, Bernie's Buddies Introduction & Group Activity.

Workshop: *Grief Support & Community Needs: Sharing, Listening, and Learning.*

Kristian Suen, Community Relations and Research Lead and Rune Black, Community Grief Facilitator for NSHPCA, led a community needs sharing and learning session to discuss grief-related needs, challenges, strengths and education needs for those working in grief in the Western Region.

WHAT WE HEARD – NOVA SCOTIA GRIEF ALLIANCE WESTERN REGION ROUNDTABLE

Panelists

- Hilary Scott – Advanced Grief Recovery Specialist, Healing the Loss.
- Terri Milton – Librarian, Grief Library, Valley Hospice.
- Heather Haughn Prosser – Social Work Consultant, South Shore Palliative Care Services.
- Rev. Nicole Uzans – St. John's Anglican Church, Songs for All Souls.
- Dr. Mary Ellen MacDonald – Co-Director, Grief Matters; and J&W Murphy Endowed Chair, Dalhousie University.

Top Themes: Needs

- Grief and trauma literacy, life skills surrounding grief and loss.
- Diversifying community connection and addressing isolation.
- Sustainable funding and more robust accessible resources.

Strengths

- **Grassroots, peer-led support** driven by lived experience.
- **Creative, informal approaches** to grief and healing.
- **Women-led initiatives** leading community-based innovation.
- **Strong collaboration** across sectors (private, nonprofit, healthcare).
- **Diverse, accessible support networks** tailored to different populations.
- **Growing grief literacy** and cultural acceptance of grief.
- **Shared spaces and resources** fostering inclusion and connection.
- **Community-driven care** that normalizes grief outside of institutional settings.

Educational Needs For Grief Workers

- **Grief and death literacy** for all ages to reduce stigma and normalize grief.
- **Training for volunteers** and peer supporters, focused on compassionate, community-based care.
- **Inclusion of diverse voices** (e.g. men, First Nations, 2SLGBTQIA+) in grief education.
- **Resource awareness and navigation**, including tools like 211 and grief navigators.
- **System-level education** on integrating grief support across sectors (health, social services, employers).



Dr. Mary Ellen MacDonald

WHAT WE HEARD – NOVA SCOTIA GRIEF ALLIANCE WESTERN REGION ROUNDTABLE

Evaluation

Most respondents rated the speaker and panelists between as a 5 out of 5. When asked whether they learned more about grief work in their area and gained new skills or insights relevant to their work, the average ratings was 4.5 out of 5.

Key recommendations from participants

- Participants gave overwhelmingly positive feedback, praising the session's timing, structure, and engaging content. Most felt the length was appropriate, though a few suggested extending it. There was interest in receiving presentation materials afterward.
- Key suggestions included continuing community-based discussions, expanding topics such as grief across the lifespan, volunteer training, asset mapping, and cross-provincial collaboration. Attendees valued opportunities to build connections, share best practices, and stay updated on available resources.
- Overall, participants appreciated the format and encouraged more of the same moving forward.

Recommendation for Future Events

- **Grief Across the Lifespan:** Including perinatal loss, bereaved families, and general grief and trauma.
- **Community & Peer Support:** Emphasis on connection, shared experiences, and continued grief conversations.
- **Practical Skills & Training:** Volunteer training, program development, facilitation strategies, and actionable tools.
- **Preferred Formats:** More roundtables, interactive workshops, and diverse panel discussions.
- **General Interest:** Openness to any grief-related topics and continuation of 2025 themes.

Next Steps

Provincial Symposium (November 18, 2025) and webinars.

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](#)