



Acadia Community Advisory Council Minutes

June 4, 2025

6:00pm – 8:00pm – KC Irving Acadia Room + Zoom

Attendance: Janis Dawson, Tanya Surette, Kelly Brenton, Ahlam Rahal, Steve Carrington, Meghan Hill, Shawna Shiers, Clarence DeSchiffart, Jean Blackler, Erica McGill, Chris Toplack, John Hubert, Patricia Wentzell, Meaghan Fullerton, Wanda MacDonald, Tara Moore.

Regrets: Birdie Bezanson, Jeff MacDonald, George Maringapasi, Ann Sylliboy, AJ Landon, Erin Eavies, Mark Adam, Corinne Haigh, Jennifer Moore, Bryan Brooks, Russell Robicheau, Alison Arthur, Andrea Noylander, and Deborah Toope.

Minutes: Janis Dawson

1. Welcome & Guest Introductions

Tara shared a free conference called Care for You focused on vicarious trauma for care workers/providers: Link - <https://www.tendacademy.ca/care4you/>

2. Updates from Program

- a. Red Spruce Mental Health Centre 2025 Reopening
 - a. Since Feb 1, 2025: **449** individual counselling, **33** groups, **130** unique clients
 - b. Current community partners: Open Arms, Evangeline Club, Valley Community Learning Association, Diamond Bailey Healing Centre, Red Door. Students providing individual and group services in community (virtual and in person)
 - c. Wanda shared info about the Bloom program, pharmacists with mental health training. Could be a possible partnership for Red Spruce. Link - <https://mha.nshealth.ca/en/services/bloom-program>
- b. CEWIL iHub Funding for 2025 Fall practicums

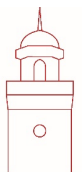
Submitted a proposal in Spring to the Coop Ed Work and integrated learning hub. Proposal was accepted. Funding will help students with travel costs, small stipend for site supervisors, professional development and materials budget for each intern.

c. School of Counselling

Tanya announced that Acadia is in the process of moving the counselling program into its own school, which will be the School of Counselling. Next steps will be that the proposal goes to 2 levels of votes to endorse, then to the board over the next few weeks. Will support the diverse identities of the profession. This move has been discussed for many years. The provincial government wanted more accessible pathways for both school and agency stream counselling practitioners in NS. M.Ed. will move to a Masters of Counselling. Name of the program has not been decided and could come back to the Advisory Council for discussion. No curriculum changes are planned. School counsellors finishing the program will continue to be eligible for upgrade with the school system. Faculty ratio and class sizes will not change because of accreditation standards. The new school will have its own Director and administrative support. Discussed the importance of maintaining strong partnerships with other schools, including the School of Education and EECD. There will be no changes with Acadia grads being fast tracked as RCT with NSCCT and CCC with CCPA. Other universities have different models (McGill) of counselling being part of faculty of education but with some autonomy. Question about people that already have an M.Ed. in counselling having disadvantages (e.g. job advertisements saying Masters of Counselling, would M.Ed. still be eligible?) Discussed the importance of advocacy and good communication. Shawn affirmed the EECD does not specify an M.Ed. is required for School Counsellors but rather a Masters of Counselling.

3. Updated from John Hubert with NSCCT on the New Health Professions Act

- Health professions act to replace 20+ other acts, process started in 2023. Counselling therapy in the 2nd group to join new act likely in



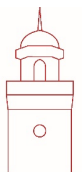
December 2025 or January 2026. Developing regulations since summer 2024. Substantial changes were needed to bylaws. Widespread modernization of the structure of NSCCT Board of Directors. Will be adopting a governance policy model this Fall. 13 person board moving to 7 people under the new model. Board will have more public representation than it does now (at least 50%).

- NSCCT will soon have practice protection in addition to title protection. Examined terms of counselling therapist vs psychotherapist. The title of NSCCT will also be changing, with movement away from the term 'college' due to confusion and all regulators will be named the *NS Regulator Of [health profession]*. Surveyed current registrants to see what title preference: 72% voted for psychotherapist title. Proposed title protection for both counselling therapist & psychotherapist. Nova Scotia Regulator of Counselling & Psychotherapy will likely be the new title for NSCCT.

4. Updates from Shawna Shiers with EECD on the New School Cns.

Guidelines

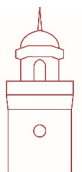
- Release of the Code of Conduct, reviewing/updating student services documents, Speech Language pathology and school psychologist & counselling guidelines. Guidelines can inform school-based staff & communities about the roles and services provided by school counsellors. Align comprehensive service guidelines across schools. 7 out of 8 regions are represented at leadership currently. Core services remain the same (wellbeing/development, life transition, career planning, learning/achievement). Roles & responsibilities in school counselling, how to provide individual and group counselling in schools to support interventions across tiers. Working to streamline documentation & referral process with forms located within the Student Information Systems. Professional identity (teachers & counsellors), connections CCPA code of ethics & standards of practice, NSTU code of ethics, NS teaching standards, ethical decision-making process which guides and outlines ethical decision making processes, updated qualifications. Still need a B.Ed. to be a school counsellor.
- Teacher provincial agreement article 70, 1 counsellor in every school



- Working with Educational leadership consortium of NS to provide PD modules for candidates who may need additional course work to qualify for school counselling jobs in NS. Need to communicate & advocate for school counsellors' scope of practice.
- John commented that the old standards are no longer publicly accessible (e.g. on the website), some confusion as to whether or not the old standards are in effect. Was removed because they were not aligned with the inclusive education policy. Shawna is schedule to speak to the school counselling cohort who are going into their practicum in Fall 2025.
- Ahlam asked about CCPA code of ethics and other counsellors having access to Tinet records and inconsistencies in practice where some school counsellors provide individual counselling and others refer out. Shawna clarified that referrals happen when the student's need is outside the counsellor's scope of practice.

5. Discussion of Current Counselling Topics & Issues – Immigration & Changing Demographics of Nova Scotians facilitated by Ahlam

- a. Overview of Topic
 - a. Increased number of immigrants in Nova Scotia. Study cites that in the first couple of years in Canada, migrants' wellbeing was rated as higher than that of the average population but over time it decreased to lower than the average Canadian population
- b. Advisors' discussion of setting specific observations
 - a. Small group discussion questions: 1. Setting specific observations, challenges, strengths, opportunities; 2. Discuss the needs for practice and counsellor education.
- c. Discussion of needs for practice and counsellor education
 - a. Strain of waiting for things like refugee or immigration applications/process is significant. Identifying structural discrimination rather than personalizing problems for individuals. Still a prevalent attitude & misinformation that immigrants are stealing jobs, bringing crime. How do we prepare an environment where immigrants feel like they were thought about, considered. Role in providing education and challenging misinformation. Example given about navigating confidentiality when needing to speak to a patient/client's spouse seeking services in the health



authority. Discussion about structural barriers for international and immigrant students and how difficult it is to have diverse representation in counselling programs like Acadia.

Some immigrants may not have trust in our systems and White counsellors, Individualistic vs collectivist worldviews. Federal government changes impacting international and immigrant students. Students arrived with plans of having family join them who now can't. Challenges with relevant and culturally-responsive services especially in rural areas with scarce resources. Interpretation services are a major barrier in the school system. Issues of informed consent using interpreters. Newcomer youth dropping out of school and/or pressure to work. We don't have good statistics to capture this issue.

Closing & Next Advisory Meeting Date

October TBD – Kelly will reach out later in the summer to confirm a date

