

Conference
May 12th – May 16th, 2026
White Point Beach Resort, Hunts Point

Tuesday	
2:00pm – 4:00pm	AGM – Lakeside Lodge
6:00pm	Dinner – Elliot’s Dining Room – Not Included

Wednesday	
Breakfast	Elliot’s Dining Room – Not Included
9:00am-Noon	Registration Opens – Table in Main Lodge Lobby
12:00pm-1pm	Lunch and Opening Remarks in Atlantic ABC
1pm-2:15pm	Key Note – Matthew Corkum – “Walk a Mile in my Shaky Shoes: <i>How Community Support Professionals Can Tap into the Ability in disABILITY</i> ”
2:15pm-2:30pm	Refreshment Break
2:30pm-4:00pm	Facilitated Hot Topics in Atlantic ABC
2:30pm-4:00pm	ED’s: Theresa Rath-Spicer & Don Spicer “Creating a Crises Communication Inventory” in Lakeside Lodge
5:00pm-6:00pm	Wine & Cheese Social in Lakeside Lodge (non-alcoholic options available)
6:30pm-8:30pm	Dinner in Atlantic ABC
After dinner	Trivia Night in Atlantic ABC

Thursday	
Breakfast	Elliot’s Dining Room
9:00am-Noon	Mental Health First Aid – Jason Falk (All Day) – Lakeside Lodge
9:00am-Noon	RICK Train the Trainer – TBD (All Day) – Crow’s Nest
9:00am-Noon	Respectful Workplaces – Addy Smith, UpTree HR
9:00am-Noon	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Housing – Allan Mountford, FANS
9:00am-Noon	Supported Decision Making – Dr. Paula Hutchinson & Kate Awen, All About Inclusion
Lunch	Elliot’s Dining Room
1:00pm-4:00pm	Mental Health First Aid – Jason Falk (All Day) – Lakeside Lodge
1:00pm-4:00pm	RICK Train the Trainer – TBD (All Day) – Crow’s Nest
1:00pm-4:00pm	Growth Mindset – Addy Smith, UpTree HR
1:00pm-4:00pm	Regulated, Resilient, and Ready – Dr. Paula Hutchinson & Kate Awen, All About Inclusion
1:00pm-4:00pm	AI Readiness for Human Services Leaders – Melissa Lloyd
6:00pm-9:00pm	Awards Dinner
8:30pm-11:00pm	Music & Dancing – Lakeside Lodge

Friday	
Breakfast	Elliot’s Dining Room
9:00am-10:30am	Sharing Our Stories – First Voice Advocates
10:30a-12:00pm	First Voice and Family – Facilitated Panel Discussion

Training and Presenter Information

Matthew Corkum (Key Note & first-voice panel): Passionate, full of animation and energy as a speaker, Matthew never backs down from difficult topics. He has always pushed the limits through his life to prosper in a wide range of environments, regardless of living with cerebral palsy. Matthew is not your average speaker, he has an art of weaving his own personal experiences with education and humor. Valedictorian of Acadia University's class of 2006, Matthew went on to achieve a PhD from in atmospheric science at York University and worked 13 years as head meteorologist in Calgary. He not only knows how to track the weather, he knows what it is like to be excluded, bullied, and discriminated against. He is a Director of Rocky Mountain Adaptive and on the Community Advisory member of Calgary Adaptive hub and past member of the City of Calgary's Advisory Committee on Accessibility. He was chosen in 2023 as one of Calgary's Top 40 under 40 by Avenue Magazine for his advocacy and speaking on inclusion of those with disabilities. More recently he was named Acadia University's 2025 Distinguished Alumni for his many achievements. Matthew loves to share experiences how he navigated working on a farm driving tractors as age 10 then working in a tire factory, the corporate world as head meteorologist and even a ski bum, all with a physical disability.

Creating a Crises Communication Inventory – Executive Director Session

Theresa Rath-Spicer & Don Spicer

The session will start with a brief presentation to emphasize the importance of organizations having a Crisis Communication Plan and related key messaging. The working portion of the session will be Executive Directors brainstorming potential crises in the sector and devising key messaging to address these crises. This session will be the first step in organizations creating a crisis communication plan and will build the NSCLO key message library that will be available to all member agencies.

Theresa Rath-Spicer: Theresa is a public relations professional with a Bachelor of Public Relations, a Master of Arts in Communications and over 29 years of communications experience. She has worked with municipal police services, international airlines, and an airport authority, including during 9/11. In many of these roles, she worked directly with senior leaders to create crises communication plans and acted as a spokesperson for 16 years.

Don Spicer: Don was a municipal police officer for 35 years who coordinated and provided critical incident training to the Halifax Regional Police for 17 years. He served three years as the Public Information Officer and as a spokesperson from the management perspective for seven. He has experience as an Executive Director of a non-profit organization, is a skilled mediator, crises negotiator, and has a Bachelor of Arts in Policing.

They both now serve as instructors with the Dalhousie University's Faculty of Open Learning & Career Development.

Mental Health First Aid – Jason Falk

Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) provides the knowledge, skills, and attitudes for participants to recognize changes in mental health, respond supportively, and apply practical actions for declining mental health and crisis situations. It helps participants build confidence, reduce stigma, and enhance their own mental health.

Jason Falk: Jason has over three decades of experience working in the community living sector in Manitoba, B.C., and Nova Scotia. During that time, he has fulfilled diverse roles,

including front-line staff, a home share provider, and positions in management and senior leadership. In addition to these roles with service providers, he was a member of the community crisis response team in Victoria, B.C. for four years.

Jason has been an instructor for over two decades in a variety of subjects, including NVCI, Mental Health First Aid, and S.I.V.A. (Supporting Individuals through Valued Attachments). In addition, he has developed training in the sector on topics such as the Neurobiology of the Brain and Wellness. He currently lives on the South Shore of Nova Scotia.

R.I.C.K Train the Trainer – Dawn McLaughlin, Ceilidh Marshall

The NSCLO Prime Directive - I am deliberate in my interactions, everything will be done with Respect, Integrity, Caring, & Knowledge (R.I.C.K.) - sets a clear standard for how member agencies engage with the individuals they support. This directive underscores the critical importance of thoughtful, intentional engagement in every interaction with those we support. The guiding framework of R.I.C.K. ensures that these interactions are consistently imbued with four core values: Respect, Integrity, Caring, Knowledge. This is a train the trainer session for new RICK Instructors.

Dawn McLaughlin: Dawn is the Director of Resident Services for RRSS. Dawn joined RRSS in 1997 with a few years abroad working with people with disabilities in Sydney, Australia. She is also currently an Associate Trainer with The Forensic Practice. Dawn co-wrote the RICK curriculum as an eager participant of this NSCLO initiative and is a Senior RICK Instructor.

Ceilidh Marshall: Ceilidh is a Resident Services Coordinator with Regional Residential Services Society (RRSS). Prior to this, she worked as a supervisor within the organization, contributing to the support and care of individuals living with RRSS. Ceilidh is also a Senior RICK Trainer, helping to promote safe, respectful support practices. She brings 15 years of experience in respite care and is passionate about advocacy and person-centered care, committed to enhancing the quality of life for those she serves. Ceilidh is a Senior RICK Instructor.

Respectful Workplaces & Growth Mindset – Addy Smith, UpTree HR

Respectful Workplaces: This session helps employees build a clear, shared understanding of what harassment can look like in the workplace and why it matters. Participants will learn how to recognize different forms of harassment (including subtle or unintentional behaviours), understand the impact on individuals and teams, and explore practical strategies for prevention and respectful communication. The training also covers what to do if you experience or witness harassment, including reporting options and how to respond in a way that promotes a safe and inclusive workplace.

Growth Mindset: This session explores the principles of developing a growth mindset—an approach where challenges are viewed as opportunities and feedback is embraced as a tool for improvement. Participants will learn strategies to reframe setbacks, foster resilience, and encourage continuous learning, leading to increased adaptability and performance in the workplace.

Addy Smith: Addy is an HR Consultant with UpTreeHR. Addy has experience with partnering with organizations across Canada to support their leadership development, employee engagement, and HR strategy formulation. Addy has her CPHR designation and works with our clients to develop people-centric solutions.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Housing – Allan Mountford, FANS

This session will provide a comprehensive overview of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), including common traits, characteristics, and symptoms. It will explore how FASD impacts individuals across the lifespan and examine the challenges many people with FASD face in finding safe, stable, and supportive housing. The session will also discuss ways organizations and service providers can better support individuals with FASD through inclusive practices, housing supports, and community-based approaches.

Allan Mountford (FANS): *Allan is the co-founder of Fetal Alcohol Nova Scotia (FANS) and has over 25 years of experience on front-line and policy work for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). He is a retired educator with over 40 years of experience in the education system, working mostly with neurodiverse students, many with undiagnosed FASD. After moving from Ontario to Nova Scotia, he met families struggling to find appropriate services for people with FASD. FANS is his promise to change their experience.*

Supported Decision Making & Regulated, Resilient, and Ready – Dr. Paula Hutchinson & Kate Awen, All About Inclusion

Supported Decision Making: This workshop equips participants with the knowledge and practical tools to embed supported decision-making into everyday policies, practices, and team expectations. Participants will gain a clear understanding of what supported decision-making is, how it works in real world settings, including an exploration of safety and the dignity of risk. The session focuses on actionable strategies that can be implemented right away, including approaches that support individuals who communicate in non-traditional ways. Participants will leave better prepared to guide teams toward decision-making practices that are respectful, consistent, and grounded in the expressed will and preferences of the people they support.

Regulated, Resilient, and Ready: This practical, interactive workshop supports leaders and staff teams in residential IDD services to build resilience while navigating the emotional, relational, and systemic demands of their work. The session emphasizes realistic self-care that fits within busy shifts and shared work environments, rather than idealized wellness practices. Participants will leave with concrete tools they can use immediately—for personal regulation, mutual support, and strengthening a more grounded, sustainable team culture. In this workshop, participants will start with a very brief overview of the theory and will then move into exploring practices, including hands-on sensory experiential learning.

Dr. Paula Hutchinson: *Paula Hutchinson is an experienced trainer, facilitator, and credentialed evaluator with an M.A. in Educational Psychology and a Ph.D. in Health with a focus on neurodiversity. Paula has worked in program development and evaluation with people experiencing disabilities and chronic conditions for nearly 30 years. Her work focuses on employment, housing, health, poverty, and the rights of people marginalized by society. Paula's training and experience have enabled her to work with every sector (i.e., non-profit and government, health, education, and community services) and with a range of groups, organizations, and healthcare leaders on a wide range of educational and evaluation initiatives. She has developed over 50 training and educational workshops, including those involving people with disabilities, non-profit organizations, marginalized and rural communities, disability advocacy groups, mental health and addiction programs, and health promotion initiatives. Working collaboratively with others, Paula draws on her first voice resiliency, and experiences as a parent of an adult son with a disability and supported living service provider to deliver authentic and accessible facilitation, training, planning, and evaluation services.*

Kate Awen: *Kate Awen has over 12 years of experience in the disability support sector in Nova Scotia having worked directly with families, individuals, and service providers. Her roles have ranged from Recreation Coordinator, Direct Support Professional, Management, Trainer, and Consultant. Throughout her work, Kate has had a focus on visual communication, sensory support, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. She has developed person-directed support plans, developed and facilitated training on Autism Spectrum Disorder, End of Life Care, Visual Communication, and more. In addition to her work in the disability support sector, Kate has 15 years of experience in emergency management as a volunteer at the Canadian Red Cross. She has deployed to multiple communities throughout Canada to support emergency response and recovery efforts. Kate is also an advisory member to the Special Care Emergency Planning Association (SCEPA). Currently, Kate is the Co-Creator of All About Inclusion, where she works as a consultant, trainer, and advocate dedicated to cultivating inclusive organisations, environments, and practices for persons with disabilities. She has developed a number of accessible workbooks designed to be used in person-directed planning, supported decision-making, and person-directed communication.*

AI Readiness in Human Services: Leading Responsibly Under Acceleration is a workshop designed for mission-driven organizations. It positions leaders with a practical, human-centered framework to:

- Protect client dignity, confidentiality, and public trust
- Reduce privacy, HR, and governance risk before AI spreads informally
- Make informed decisions about free versus paid AI tools
- Align AI use with mission, funding requirements, and board oversight
- Identify clear next steps that build confidence without destabilizing teams

Melissa Lloyd: *Melissa Lloyd is the founder of Aigility Hub and a trusted expert in helping leaders and teams build readiness and confidence for real-world AI use. She works with organizations across Canada to align strategy, strengthen trust, and build the mindset and confidence for responsible, human-first transformation. Known for her clear and grounded approach, Melissa blends emotional intelligence with practical strategy to help teams reclaim time, strengthen culture, and lead responsibly in a rapidly changing world. She partners with organizations including Futurpreneur, Invest Nova Scotia, Digital Nova Scotia, and CBDC.*

Chris Montigny: *Chris is a partner at HR Atlantic, where he advises clients on labour relations, negotiations, arbitration, and employment matters. A skilled labour lawyer, he focuses on practical, sustainable solutions that support client goals while maintaining positive workplace relationships. With a strong background in advocacy and litigation, Chris has been working in dispute resolution since 2001 and has served as chief spokesperson for public and private sector employers in Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. His collaborative approach brings a well-rounded perspective to complex workplace issues. Chris holds a Doctor of Law J.D. from the University of Toronto and a BSc in Chemistry from the University of Prince Edward Island. Chris is active in his community and is currently a member of the Canadian Association of Counsel for Employers. In his free time, Chris enjoys spending time with his family and keeping up with the Toronto Blue Jays.*

First Voice and Family – Facilitated Panel Discussion

Friday will kick off with a powerful panel discussion featuring Matthew Corkum and other first voice individuals who will share their personal stories and lived experiences. Panelists will begin by introducing themselves and speaking about their journeys, offering insight into the realities they have faced and the paths that have shaped them.

The conversation will then move into a facilitated panel discussion, featuring both predetermined questions and opportunities for audience engagement. This session is designed to foster meaningful dialogue, learning, and reflection.

The full panel lineup will be announced closer to the conference date.