



Dementia: Understanding the Journey

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Chair

This past year marked another milestone, with 2039 individuals completing the Dementia: Understanding the Journey (DUTJ) course. Learner satisfaction remained exceptionally high at 97%, and the projects submitted were thoughtful and visually compelling, and demonstrated meaningful application of the course material. Both learners and facilitators shared impactful insights and reflections, many of which are highlighted throughout this report.

Reaching this unprecedented number of course completions would not have been possible without the commitment and enthusiasm of our dedicated facilitators and post-secondary education partners. Their passion for dementia care and their ability to inspire learners to apply foundational knowledge in real-world settings are truly at the heart of this course's success.

On behalf of the Board, I extend sincere gratitude to every facilitator who led DUTJ sessions over the past year. Your continued efforts are instrumental; you are the reason this course makes such a difference.

This past year, we started working on our strategic goals for the coming years, revisiting our mission, vision, values, and prioritizing our goals. Another major initiative during this period has been the 8th revision of the DUTJ course. Keeping the content timely and application based remains a core strength of the course, transferring learning to today's care environments. With the continued involvement of our members, educators, and Board, we are committed to elevating dementia care practices through the learners who have completed the DUTJ course and are now promoting the principles and foundations of dementia.

Completing the DUTJ course has never been easier, the flexibility of offering DUTJ both online and in-person across a variety of health and education courses enhances its reach and impact. By supporting person-centred care and meaningful engagement, the course continues to make a difference in the lives of those impacted by dementia care.

Sincerely,

Jody MacDonald

Jody MacDonald, RN
DUTJ Board Chair



Jody MacDonald
Board Chair



DUTJ Board

The Dementia: Understanding the Journey Society is incorporated and has ownership of the Dementia: Understanding the Journey Course. The Board works tirelessly to meet the goals of the Society and is passionate and devoted to dementia care.

A summary of the Society's main objectives are:

- » Maintain standards and content, review, evaluate and revise the DUTJ Course.
- » Promote and monitor the delivery of the DUTJ Course.
- » Identify issues related to the care of persons living with dementia related diagnosis, and forward recommendations to the appropriate bodies or individuals.
- » Ensure that sufficient resources are in place to sustain the DUTJ Course.
- » Promote the affairs of the Society.

Through the Board, the Society demonstrates a commitment to diversity of leadership within its membership and directorship. Membership is a three (3) year term with one renewable term. New members are sought via the selection process and are expected to be active participants on the board, including attending and participating in meetings and business.

Nominations to fill vacancies on the Board are accepted from individuals and designated organizations, as detailed in the Board membership. The Board will make the final selection of membership from the information provided in the nominations.

This year, the Board welcomed one new member, Mary MacNeil-MacDonald, and as Carrie Fraizer steps away from her role, would like to thank her for the valuable contributions to the DUTJ Board as the Continuing Care (Long-Term Care) Representative.

The Board is looking to fill two vacant seats. If you or a member of your team is interested in joining the Board, we would welcome the nomination.

Vacant Seats

- » Veteran's Services Representative
- » Continuing Care (Long-Term Care) Representative



Accomplishing Our Goals

Providing quality dementia education while embracing the future and expanding the reach of the DUTJ Course are primary objectives of Board. This goal is reflected in the current Mission, Vision and Values and helped the Board consider the future, ensuring that the work aligns with and models the course values.

Our current Mission, Vision and Values is evolving:

CURRENT:

MISSION

To embrace dementia education as a tool to enhance quality of life

VISION

Excellent dementia care for all

VALUES

- Innovation that fuels transformation
- Life-long learning that is person-centered, evidence-informed and current
- Dynamic relationships built on collaboration

MISSION

Foster the advancement of foundational dementia education.

VISION

Persons living with dementia flourish.

VALUES

- **Respect:** We are inclusive, honest, and compassionate in all of our interactions.
- **Quality:** We deliver excellent, evidence-informed education that is current, relevant, and reflects best practice.
- **Accountability:** We serve the educational needs of our diverse and changing community and use all resources efficiently.
- **Collaboration:** We link with partners to enhance dementia education that advocates for a culture of compassion and person-centered care.



Our Year in Review

The 2020-2025 strategic directions wrapped up this year. The strategic direction focus areas included:

1. CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN EDUCATION OFFERINGS AND THE PRACTICE SETTING CULTURE.

As demonstrated through the course statistics outlined below, the courses are attended by diverse healthcare sectors/settings and roles, there is strong satisfaction reported by learners (97%), there is improvement of knowledge and skills reported by learners (96%), the majority of course tools are useful; and learners report the final project is highly relevant (92%).

2. ENHANCING CURRICULUM DESIGN

The Board contracted Nova Scotia Centre on Aging (CoA) to complete the latest revision of the DUTJ Course. This revision required CoA to complete a variety of activities to ensure the curriculum was relevant, current, evidence-based, and informed by sector partners, facilitators, Board members, and graduates.

3. ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEM CHANGE AND PERSON-CENTRED CARE CULTURE THROUGHOUT EDUCATION.

Although difficult to measure, the advocacy role the Board plays within the health system is crucial. The Board works tirelessly to promote the goals of the course, maintain connection and relevance for current education programs (CCA, PN, BScN), while exploring other options to expand.

New Priorities

Recognizing the 5-year strategic plan was wrapping up, the DUTJ Board started reflecting on its future direction. Through this work, the Board identified four key strategic priorities designed to enhance the impact, relevance, and sustainability of the Dementia: Understanding the Journey (DUTJ) course. These priorities respond to the evolving needs of learners, educators, and the broader dementia care community, and lay the foundation for continued growth and innovation.

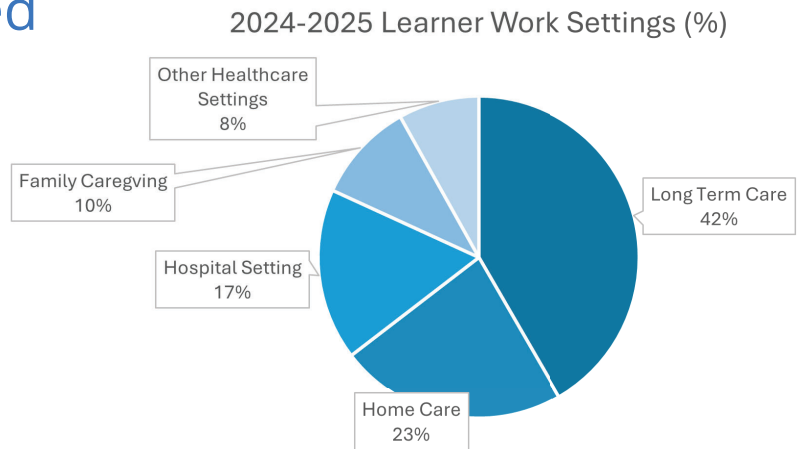
The resulting strategic priorities include: Diversification of Course Delivery Modes, focusing on integrating Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), developing micro-credentials, and tailoring content for varied audiences; Sustainable Growth, which emphasizes financial sustainability, expansion into new regions, and strategic partnerships; Marketing and Connections, aimed at increasing course visibility and strengthening sector relationships; and Board Performance, which includes improving governance practices and increasing diversity through targeted recruitment strategies. These priorities reflect a shared commitment to continuous improvement, educational excellence, and advancing person-centred dementia care.

Over the next year the DUTJ Administration will develop an implementation plan to start the journey of realizing our new strategic priorities.



Care Settings Represented

As depicted in the chart: 2024-2025 Learner Work Settings (%), DUTJ learners come from a variety of care environments including home care, hospitals, family caregiving, and other healthcare settings with highest completion rates in long-term care (42%). Having satisfied learners and quality deliveries in these diverse settings helps to market the course to many sectors and individuals in different roles.

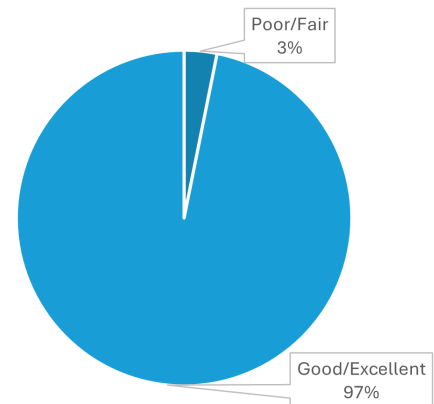


“ This course exposed my knowledge, as I was made to understand that dementia is a journey that we never planned for, but we should be prepared to welcome the challenges that the journey comes with. ”

Course Satisfaction

As outlined in the chart: 2024-2025 Course Satisfaction (%), DUTJ learners were asked to rate their satisfaction level with the DUTJ Course. The majority (97%) of participants reported a very strong level of satisfaction.

2024-2025 Course Satisfaction (%)

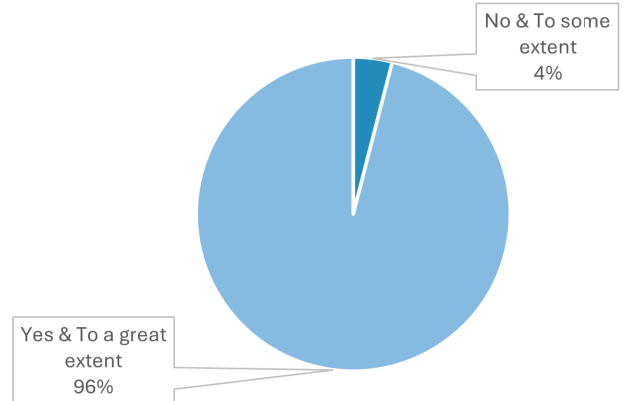


“ Our facilitator’s enthusiasm, made me excited to come to class and learn, and her classes were always fun and enjoyable and very well explained. ”

Improved Knowledge and Skills

Learner feedback collected through course evaluations supports the Board’s goal to close the gap between education and practice. As identified in the chart: 2024-2025 Improved Knowledge & Skills (%), the majority of learners (96%) reported the course improved their overall knowledge and skills.

2024-2025 Improved Knowledge & Skills (%)



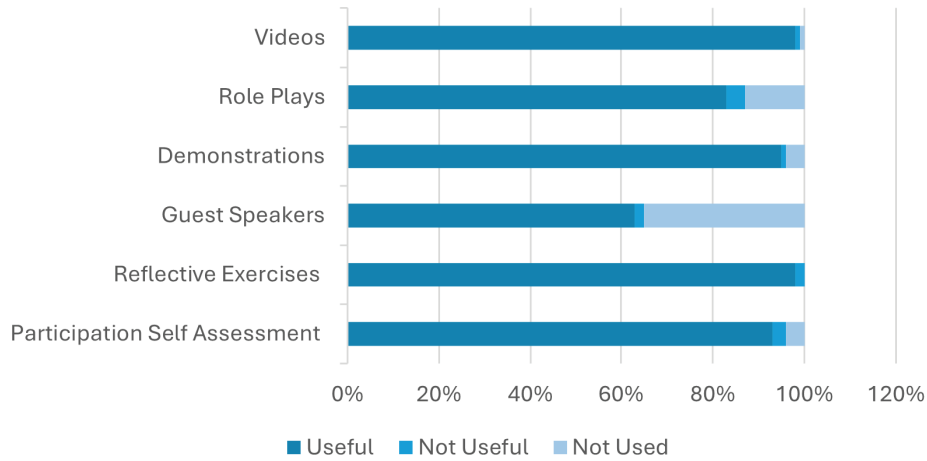
“ The Dementia course has changed me as a person, as a caregiver, and my perspectives as well. My way of communication and approach has changed and improved in an excellent way after this course. Barbara’s story was so moving, I came to know that how a person living with dementia lives in a different world. That has changed me in a better way. ”



Usefulness of Course Tools

Learners indicated the adult learning focused tools embedded in the course are useful and relevant for the education. As indicated in the chart: 2024-2025 Learners Usefulness Ratings (%), the main tools used during the course are the self-assessments (93%), reflective exercises (98%), role plays (83%) and videos (98%).

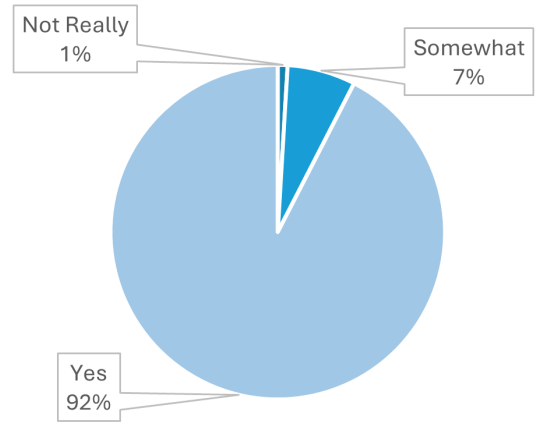
2024-2025 Learners Usefulness Ratings (%)



Final Project Relevance

The DUTJ Course has a final project required at the end of the course; the purpose of the project is to allow students to demonstrate their ability to integrate the course into their life. Identifying key elements that resonated for them and how they plan to adopt the DUTJ philosophy into their daily practice are showcased in the project. As indicated in the chart: 2024-2025 Project Relevance (%), the vast majority (92%) indicated the project gave them the opportunity to demonstrate what they learned in the course.

2024-2025 Project Relevance (%)



“ This is a great course because the concepts do not only impact you positively to care for people living with dementia, but it helps shapes your personality and makes you realize your true self. Develop a kind heart and treat everyone around you equally with love, respect and compassion. ”



Enhancing Curriculum Design

Ensuring the DUTJ Course remains relevant and up to date is a key part of curriculum enhancement. The review and revision process follows a five-year cycle, unless significant changes in research or content necessitate an earlier update.

In 2023, the Board contracted the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging (CoA) to lead the most recent course review and revision. Since then, CoA has undertaken a thorough and collaborative process to evaluate and revise the course and its accompanying tools.

As part of this work, CoA conducted a comprehensive literature review (including both peer-reviewed and grey literature), gathered feedback through consultations with sector partners, facilitators, Board members, and course graduates, and reviewed evaluation data from both learners and facilitators. They also engaged subject matter experts for content-specific input and presented the Board with proposed updates, including changes to course language, session structure, and content organization.

By October 2024, the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging finalized the revisions for the 8th Edition of the DUTJ curriculum. To support the updated content, graphic designer Bryanna Chapeskie completed a full redesign of both the facilitator and learner manuals, ensuring they are visually engaging and aligned with the revised material.

The 8th Edition of the DUTJ course is anticipated for release by September 2025, following the completion of facilitator orientation on the updated curriculum.

Session 4: Supportive Care Part II



Eating, Assessing, and Monitoring

Given the changes occurring because of dementia, it is important to monitor and regularly assess the eating capabilities of a person living with dementia. Doing so will help you adjust the support you provide. Incorporating strategies in the care plan is essential to encouraging, promoting, and supporting healthy eating, optimizing the person's health and well-being.

Flexibility is Key

A key consideration of food intake is flexibility. As the person's abilities change with the progression of the disease, so should the support that is provided. Care providers need to be aware of changes in the person and provide creative, flexible support, while maintaining the person's autonomy. Causes of eating challenges differ according to the individual and change over time.



Thinking Critically

What are some challenges you might face if you suddenly needed help to eat a meal?

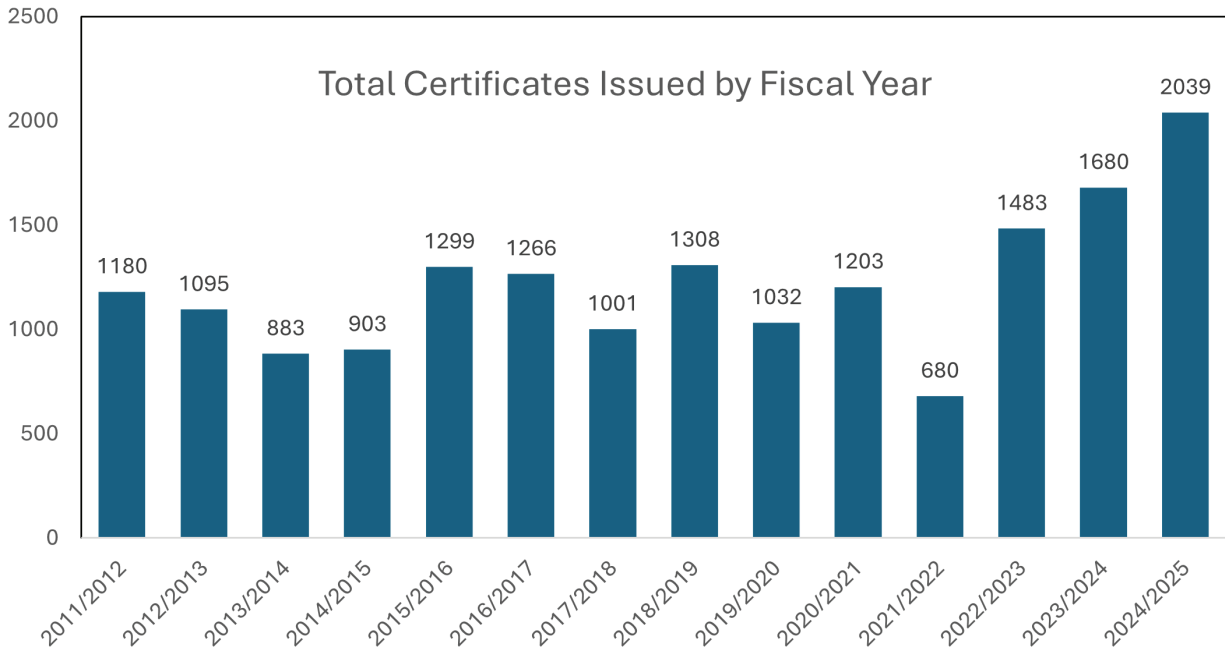
How would you feel?



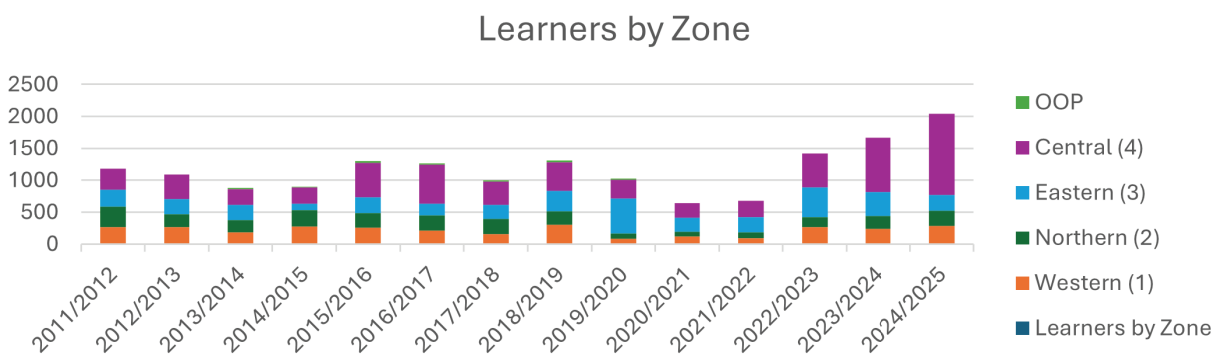
Course Delivery and Statistics

Between the continued pressures facing Nova Scotia employers recruiting nursing and nonregulated staff, and the Department of Seniors and Long Term Care’s CCA Free Tuition Initiative, the DUTJ Course saw record high enrollments again this year and it is expected this will continue for the following fiscal year.

For the fiscal year April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, 35 organizations delivered 126 courses which resulted in a total of 2039 certificates issued. The table below represents certificates issued over the past 14 years:



The chart: Learners by Zone, outlines the zones where the learners took the course. Note the moderate disbursement between all zones (1-4).

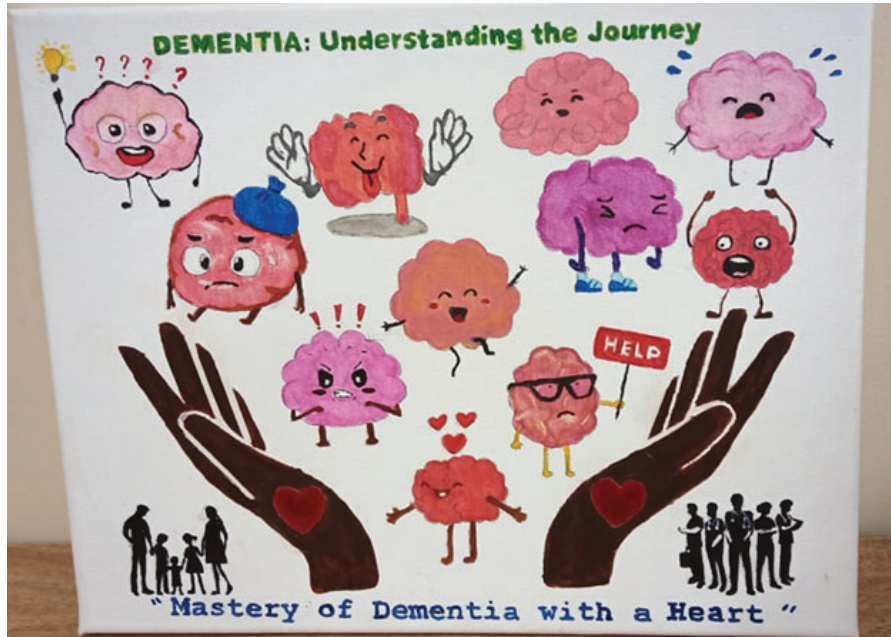


Upon completing the course, learners submit an information form which asks them to indicate their role (student, health care professional, administration, etc.) and role type (CCA, LPN, RN, Dietary, etc.). This information helps us understand more about the learner population of the course and how it evolves over time. The DUTJ Course relies heavily on partnerships with like-minded organizations such as Alzheimers Society NS, and health education courses such as the CCA Program, the Practical Nursing (PN) Program, and the Nursing Degree (BScN) Program. These partnerships allow us to continue to grow and evolve as a course and adopt the most recent examples of excellence.



Project Samples

We would like to give credit to Mellody Corral, Aiza Alcaide and Rovelyn Menor for their DUTJ final project submissions. These learners showcased their learning from DUTJ in unique and creative ways, and we are so happy they were willing to share these submissions.



Submission by Mellody Corral and Aiza Alcaide



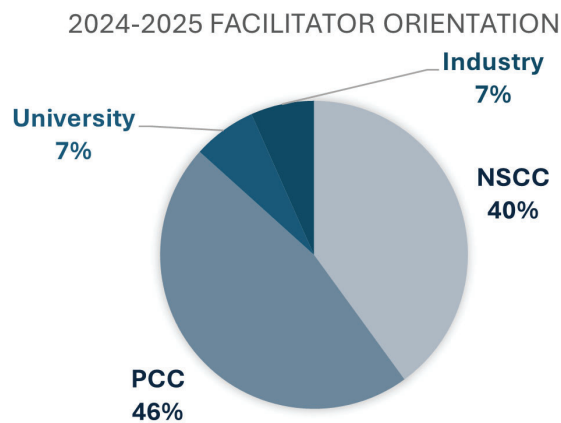
Submission by Rovelyn Menor



Facilitator Orientation

The Dementia: Understanding the Journey Board is committed to its mission, to embrace dementia education as a tool to enhance quality of life. Although originally adapted in response to COVID-19, the DUTJ Course is now consistently being delivered in a blended, online format. Virtual education has offered the opportunity to see groups come together provincially, nationally, and internationally.

Having a virtual option for the Facilitator Orientation continues to create wider accessibility for interested facilitators across the province and strengthens the out of province (OOP) learners, which will eventually allow for access outside Nova Scotia. In June, September, November, 2024, the Dementia: Understanding the Journey Society hosted 3 virtual facilitator orientation sessions. As indicated in the chart: 2024-2025 Facilitator Orientation, these orientations introduced 30 new facilitators to the course materials. Attendees came from a variety of settings, with Private Career Colleges having the highest number of participants (46%).



These virtual sessions were facilitated by Marlene Fairhurst-Vaughan. They featured a review of course materials, activities to get to know the manuals, an introduction to the online facilitator's toolkit and a review of administrative procedures. As a part of the evaluation, the newly orientated facilitators indicated the sessions were helpful and engaging.



QUOTES FROM FACILITATOR EVALUATIONS

Our facilitator was fantastic. I really found the part of the course where we did the scavenger hunt in the facilitator manual very helpful. I also loved the focus on person-centered language.

I think all the content is well laid out for a facilitator to be able to navigate through the course with students. It is a tremendous help to have all the power points and notes already prepared. It saves so much time and cuts down on stress levels.

It was a great session, really enjoyed collaborating with colleagues in the breakout sessions.



Conferences

As with other years, we sponsored and participated in the excellent annual provincial conference presented by Alzheimer's Society of Nova Scotia.

We were invited to be a member of the planning and development committee for the Alzheimers Society Conference; this was a fantastic and educational experience for us. During the conference we sponsored four course vouchers; each voucher covers the cost for the winner to take the course anywhere in NS.

Also, this past year we sponsored and hosted a booth at the Northwood Symposium which was well received, and again provided a fabulous educational experience. During the conference we sponsored four course vouchers; each voucher covered the cost for the winner to take the course anywhere in NS.



Board of Directors and Administration

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION	REPRESENTING	APPOINTED/TERM END
JODY MACDONALD jodymac@hotmail.ca	Chair/Member at Large	March, 2027
MARLENE FAIRHURST-VAUGHAN mfvaughan@gmail.com	Vice-Chair/Family Support Representative	March, 2027
CAITLIN WRIGHT caitlin.wright@nshealth.ca	Mental Health	Appointed
KATRINA OWEN katrina.owen@novascotia.ca	Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care	Appointed
PAUL FIELDHOUSE paul.fieldhouse@nshealth.ca	Responsive Behaviours	Appointed
SACHA NADEAU sacha.nadeau@asns.ca	Alzheimer Society Nova Scotia	Appointed
BRENDA ETHERIDGE brenda.etheridge@nshealth.ca	Continuing Care (Open)	October, 2026
CALLIE KERR callie.kerr@seaviewmanor.ca	Continuing Care (Open)	October, 2026
MARY MACNEIL-MACDONALD 3M@GCHSA.ca	Continuing Care (Home Care)	October, 2027
CHRISTEL MACALONEY christelm@futureworx.ca	Education Institution (Private)	October, 2026
KAREN BRIAND kbriand@stfx.ca	Education Institution (Public)	February, 2025
JOANNE HUGHES joannehughes2@gmail.com	Member at Large	March, 2027
ROBERTA DUCHESNE roberta.duchesne@nshealth.ca	Acute Care	June, 2025
VACANT	Continuing Care (LTC)	
VACANT	Veterans Services	
CAILLEAGH SHARPLES cailleagh.sharples@healthassociation.ns.ca	Treasurer/Secretary Course Administration	
SHAUNA HUNTLEY shauna.huntley@healthassociation.ns.ca	Course Administration	
SANDRA DI NARDO sandra.dinardo@healthassociation.ns.ca	Course Administration	

Calls for nominations are issued when positions are available. Nominations to fill vacancies on the Board are accepted from individuals as well as designated organizations. The Board makes the final selection of membership using a selection matrix.





DEMENTIA: UNDERSTANDING THE JOURNEY

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