

Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists

ANNUAL REPORT
2023



Land Acknowledgement

The Nova Scotia College of Counselling Therapists would like to respectfully acknowledge that we do our work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqivik (Maliseet) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources, but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqivik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between Nations. As we strive for respectful partnerships with all the peoples of this beautiful province in search of collective healing and true reconciliation.

The **Mission** is an enduring and descriptive statement that sets out the boundaries of legitimate activity for the College.

To regulate the profession of counselling therapy, exclusively in the public interest

The **Vision** is a compelling statement of aspirations within the boundaries of the Mission. It projects into the future as a rallying cry for change and growth within a specific time horizon.

Excellence in the stewardship and regulation of Counselling Therapy

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Values convey what we stand for and what should characterize our attitudes, decisions and behaviour. Values are used to monitor the "rightness" of day-to-day decisions and longer-term strategic choices.

Respect
Accountability
Equity, Diversity & Inclusiveness
Transparency/Openness
Humility
Stewardship
Responsiveness

Message from the Board Chair

Members of the NSCCT community,

Allow me to start by voicing appreciation for all of the people who have stepped into healing roles in our communities as Counseling Therapists and Candidates. This past year was hard on many Nova Scotians, with a high degree of unusual challenges that included fires, floods and rough economic times. In the face of these hardships, people came together and because of your unique presence, skills and effort, communities have been able to heal. I invite you to take a moment to pause, breathe in and out a little slower than you normally do, and feel the warm sensation of gratitude in your heart for your part in this process. Thank you.

As we pause to reflect, we can easily connect to the Earth through the sensation of gravity and remember that this land is alive, has a rich history and holds us all. We are here in the Mi'kma'ki, the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all treaty people and honour the complex diversity in our province.

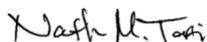
I would also like to acknowledge the supervisors, teachers and mentors for all their patience and wisdom as well as all the Beings in this grand ecology. We can bring special gratitude for the Water, without which nothing would exist.

This has been another busy year at the Nova Scotia College of Counseling Therapists and I'm thrilled to share with you some of the powerful shifts in our infrastructure:

- We have continued to increase tools to protect the public and keep counselling therapists and candidates accountable through a series of engaging educational videos, infographics around the complaints process and streamlined access for filing complaints.
- We now have a Sexual Misconduct Reporting Line that is available 24/7 for people to call if they have experienced sexualized violence from a counselling therapist.
- Our website has been completely rebuilt, which includes an online portal to manage all of the candidacy and supervision documents. This will increase security with these documents as well as protect against unexpected challenges that would otherwise create a void in documentation.
- We've also been in close conversation with the Department of Health managing the requirements of the new *Regulated Health Professions Act*. The new act will increase the efficiency of mental health services in our profession as well as other providers in the province.

As I step down from the Chair and into the role of Past-Chair, I want to offer a huge thank you to our staff, John Hubert (Executive Director and Registrar) and Mary Kate Jollymore (Administrative Coordinator) for their hard work and support.

Warmly with Gratitude,



Nathan M. Torti

Notes from the Executive Director & Registrar

Season's Greetings,

In last year's message I predicted that 2023 would be "an adventure in governance." It was that, but not only in the way I intended. As we continued to work through the Regulated Health Professions network to provide input into the government's pending common foundation legislation, we received some unexpected good news. First, we discovered that registered counselling therapists will be included along with social workers and psychologists in an expansion of MSI coverage for mental health services in the province. Second, we were informed that our CCPA colleagues were successful in moving the federal government to commit to dropping the GST/HST from counselling therapy services nationwide. Both of these initiatives will be a boon for the profession and most importantly they will help extend much needed care to those who need it most. These changes also have the potential to drive an increase in NSCCT registrations.

Learning from the dramatic rise in numbers for the second straight year, the College has proactively invested in a variety of automated systems that will sustain operations well into the future and ensure our ability to accommodate growth and change. These include systems in finance, applications processing, registration management, supervision, practice support and complaints.

Beyond these innovations, the College has further advanced the policy regime of the College and made solid strides in a number of other important areas included in this report. But what I think we should all be most proud of is the remarkable progress we've made together toward our strategic objective of tackling sexual misconduct by counselling therapists. We have successfully implemented a number of mechanisms to help identify and respond to the most egregious form of betrayal of the counselling alliance, and the behaviour most damaging to the integrity and public-perception of the profession.

With the recent proclamation of the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, we have already begun the work of reviewing the companion General Regulations proposed by the DHW, and using working groups of registrants and stakeholder advisors to begin crafting profession-specific regulations and bylaws that will govern the College for the next generation. This work will be difficult and taxing for all involved and it will have to occur over a very aggressive time-line. But the new *Act* provides a unique opportunity for the College to make significant changes that will enhance our ability to be innovate and become leaders in the public-interest regulation of counselling therapy in the country.

I want to personally thank each and every member of the Board for their individual support and their collective ability to think strategically into the future through a distinctly public-interest lens. And of course, very little of this would ever get done without Mary Kate's constant efforts.

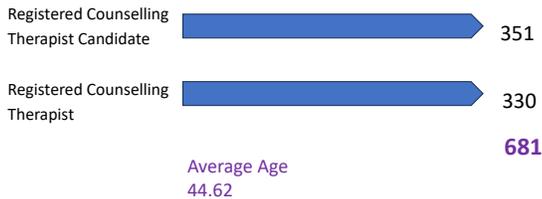
Respectfully,



John Hubert

College Snapshot

Current Registrants (active practicing)



Source: NSCCT 2023

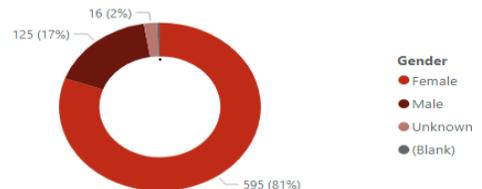
Gender Distribution

Counselling therapy continues to be a predominantly female-identified profession, here as well as across the country.

Active Practicing Registrants

By the end of 2023 there will be more than 700 licensed counselling therapists providing mental health services to citizens of Nova Scotia. This is double the number from just three years ago!

Gender Breakdown



Candidacy Supervisors

27% of RCT are approved candidacy supervisors

This means there are 4 candidates for every available supervisor

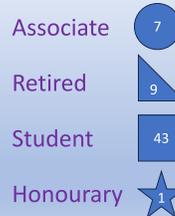
Supervisor/Candidate Ratio

This is the first year in the history of the College that the number of RCT-Cs has exceeded the number of RCTs. This trend is likely to continue and speaks to the importance of continuing work with our educational colleagues to prepare an even larger cadre of well-trained and experienced candidacy supervisors as our numbers grow.

Affiliate Members

The steady growth in the number of student affiliates speaks to the desire of the next generation of counselling therapists to be recognized as professional mental health care providers and to the impact counselling therapy master's programs are having on helping students to foster a professional identity from the earliest stage of their careers.

Affiliate Members (non-licensed)



Board Highlights

This has been another busy and challenging year for our volunteer Board of Directors. These are just some of the major results of their work:

- Completed the final FRPA requirement.
- Funded a Sexual Misconduct Reporting Line as part of our commitment to strategic direction #2.
- Funded a Sexual Misconduct Complaint Navigator as part of our commitment to strategic direction #2.
- Established a Sexual Misconduct Complaints Process Support Fund as part of our commitment to strategic direction #2.
- Responded to the NS Mass Casualty Commission Recommendations for Health Regulators.
- Provided a mechanism to allow Student Affiliate Members to apply their membership fee toward their initial RCT-Candidacy registration.
- Negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Yorkville University to allow rejected applicants an opportunity to upgrade their application up to three required.
- Submitted a draft MOU to facilitate discussion with the Department of Education and Childhood Development and NS Regional Centres for Education.
- Established the College's first social media presence X (twitter).
- Adopted a fully automated financial management system managed by the Health Association of Nova Scotia.
- Developed an individualized and fully automated application and registration management system through *Pontum Innovations*; this system also manages candidacy supervision and complaints, and is being expanded to track continuing education.
- Initiated the use of Artificial Intelligence assisted video tutorials to enhance information transfer to applicants, registrants, candidacy supervisors, board/committees and the public. Our leadership with this technology has gained provincial and national recognition.
- The website has been redesigned and modernized to complement our enhanced technology use.
- Approved several new policies and embraced mechanisms to better guide and support registrants in regulatory elements of their counselling therapy practice:

Policy Supplements

Standard Change Advisories

New Standard Advisories



We are also very proud to present the first Lifetime Honourary Affiliate Membership to GIC Board Representative **Lisa Matthews** in recognition of her integrity and commitment to the College's public-interest mandate.

Progress on Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions are the broad-based platforms for change that guide nearer-term priority setting and operational planning.

Anti-racism

Robust response to sexual misconduct

Indigenous pathways to registration/complaints

Strategic Direction #2

... is a commitment to redouble efforts to prevent, collect and investigate sexual misconduct complaints and to impose appropriate discipline as warranted. This year, the College has made enormous strides toward meeting strategic objective #2:

- Zero Tolerance Policy
- Regulatory Practice Notice
- Sexual Misconduct Complaints Process Support Fund
- Sexual Misconduct Reporting Line
 - Sexual Misconduct Complaint Navigator contracted
 - Navigator training completed by Avalon Sexual Assault Centre (EDR and Admin Coordinator also attended)
- Automatic external investigation for all sexual misconduct complaints
- Mandatory penalties sought:
 - minimum formal reprimand for sexual misconduct
 - license revocation for sexual abuse
- AI tutorials covering sexual misconduct
 - Public - Reporting Sexual Misconduct
 - New Applicants - mandatory Sexual Misconduct mini-course
 - New renewal requirement - mandatory Sexual Misconduct mini-course

Committee Reports

Registration Committee

Applications

168 applications reviewed
120 new RCT-Cs approved
22 new RCTs
13 new CFTA transfers
4 new international registrants
3 applications denied
4 new counselling therapy programs approved

Policy Work

Response to *Patient Access to Care Act* changes
Non-conferred Graduates
Guidelines for Determining Qualification Equivalency for the Purpose of Application Assessment
Reviewing approach to specialty practice and single modality graduate degrees
Process for candidacy non-progress and committee imposed remedial plans
New registration management system *Pontem Innovations*
Application processing time *from completed application to decision* has gone from 30 days to a standard of 2 business days



Complaints Committee

Complaint Files

5 files closed

- 1 Informal Resolution Agreement (IRA)
- 4 dismissed

4 new complaints received

10 open files

2 licenses remain suspended

1 referral to Professional Conduct forthcoming

0 active investigations

1 IRA scheduled for a Healing Circle

Notable Policy Changes

- IRA diversion to Indigenous Restorative Healing Circle
- Automatic external investigation for all sexual misconduct complaints
- Enhanced automation for complaints processing through *Pontem*

G007 Software	1,000.00
G008 Stakeholder Engagement	1,000.00
G009 Dues, Fees and Registrations	1,900.00
G010 Professional Development	10,000.00
G011 Rent	15,870.00
G012 Office Phone	1,200.00
G013 Mobile Phone	500.00
G014 Travel - Board/Committees	1500.00
G015 AGM Expense	<u>3,700.00</u>
G016 Total General & Admin	<u>51,510.00</u>
TOTAL EXPENSE	<u>338,160.00</u>
NET INCOME	<u>- 30,760.00</u>
Projected balance end of fiscal year	<u><u>283,055.00</u></u>

Incoming Board

Executive

Chair: Chris Charles, RCT

Vice Chair: Theresa Fraser, RCT

Pat Chair: Nathan Torti, RCT

Secretary: Felicia Burchell, RCT

Members-at-Large

Cynthia Manley, RCT

Drew McClure, RCT-C

Kerry O'Reilly, RCT

Lori Slaunwhite, RCT

GIC Public Representatives

Alana Baxter

John Boddie

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