

Communication at the Frontline

Halifax, NS

Atlantica Hotel, Guild Hall

February 25 & 26, 2026

Times shown are Atlantic Day Time (ADT)

Day 1

8:00 a.m. **Registration & Breakfast**

9:00 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

9:30 a.m. **Frontline Realities: Boundaries, Culture, and Client Relationships**

Hosted by Jen Lohnes

Frontline settlement work requires navigating cultural tensions, building trust without overextending, and balancing compassion with clear boundaries. In this moderated panel, frontline settlement workers will reflect on real-life scenarios involving cultural differences, role clarity, referrals, and supporting client independence.

10:45 a.m. **Break**

11:00 a.m. **Crisis Communication and Non-Violent De-escalation**

Cong Chen

In this keynote, Cong Chen explores how frontline staff navigate and shape turning points in moments of crisis. The session focuses on recognizing survival responses, understanding that behaviour has meaning, and using tone, posture, and language intentionally to redirect situations toward safe and constructive outcomes.

12:00 p.m. **Lunch**

1:00 p.m. **Afternoon Gathering**

1:15 p.m. **Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Rotation 1**

De-escalation in Practice: Small Actions, Real Impact

Hosted by Cong Chen

This interactive session applies the morning's crisis communication tools through guided role-play and real settlement scenarios. Participants will practice verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal strategies, experiment with simple scripts to pause and redirect escalating moments and explore how small shifts in communication can influence outcomes in high-pressure situations.

Nervous System Care and Sustainable Frontline Practice

Hosted by Kayla BreeLove

This session explores the nervous system realities of high-demand service roles and offers practical approaches to caring for oneself after caring for others. Participants will reflect on how stress accumulates, how to recognize early signals of overload, and how to integrate grounding and recovery practices into daily work.



- 2:45 p.m. **Break**
- 3:00 p.m. **Concurrent Breakout Sessions – Rotation 2**
- De-escalation in Practice: Small Actions, Real Impact**
Hosted by Cong Chen
This interactive session applies the morning’s crisis communication tools through guided role-play and real settlement scenarios. Participants will practice verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal strategies, experiment with simple scripts to pause and redirect escalating moments and explore how small shifts in communication can influence outcomes in high-pressure situations.
- Nervous System Care and Sustainable Frontline Practice**
Hosted by Kayla BreeLove
This session explores the nervous system realities of high-demand service roles and offers practical approaches to caring for oneself after caring for others. Participants will reflect on how stress accumulates, how to recognize early signals of overload, and how to integrate grounding and recovery practices into daily work.
- 4:30 p.m. **Closing the Day Together**
Hosted by Kayla BreeLove
A guided grounding and transition space designed to help participants settle, reflect on the day’s learning, and move into the evening with intention and care.

Day 2

- 8:00 a.m. **Breakfast**
- 9:00 a.m. **Welcome Back**
- 9:15 a.m. **Intersectionality in Frontline Communication**
Hosted by Briana Miller and Ayesha Naqvi
This session introduces the concept of intersectionality and explores why communication strategies must shift depending on context, identity, power, and lived experience. Participants will examine how intersecting identities influence trust, perception, and access, and how frontline communication can be adapted thoughtfully and effectively.
- 10:15 a.m. **Break**
- 10:30 a.m. **World Café and Share-Back**
Hosted by Briana Miller
Participants will rotate through small-group discussions applying an intersectional lens to real frontline scenarios. The session concludes with a collective share-back, highlighting practical insights and strategies generated through conversation.
- 12:15 p.m. **Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m. **Questions and Connections**
A facilitated closing session offering space for reflection, dialogue, and exchange. Participants will have the opportunity to ask further questions, share experiences, and strengthen cross-sector connections with fellow frontline workers.
- 2:00 p.m. **End of the event**