

The Beacon

Winter and Spring 2024

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Thank you to the
Department of Seniors
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Hello Caregivers, Community Partners and Friends

The summer and fall were busy at Caregivers Nova Scotia. We are a small staff and had a number of changes. Nicole Byers, Caregiver Support Coordinator in the South Shore had a baby in July and is now on MAT leave. We miss her but love seeing her thrive as a new mom! Congratulations Nicole!

We hired Lisa Knocton to cover the opening we had in Eastern HRM. Lisa comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and we are excited to have her on our team. We also hired Sheila Landry to fill the newly opened South Shore region. Sheila comes to us with a vast history of personal caregiving experience and we are grateful to have her on our team! Find out more about Lisa and Sheila in their welcome articles.

Brenda Sangster, Office Administrator, is retiring at the end of December. Find a fare-

well message from her on page 8. Brenda is the longest employee of Caregivers Nova Scotia, she has truly dedicated so much of her heart and herself to this organization, the staff, and mostly to the caregivers we serve. It feels like the end of an era to see her go. We will miss her deeply but wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

I'd like to send heartfelt holiday greetings and well wishes to you all this holiday season and through 2024. We are grateful to all caregivers and to all our community partners and friends. It truly takes a village, or an entire province, to identify, recognize, and support caregivers.

Jenny Theriault,
Executive Director



Staff Learning Circle

The Staff Learning Circle is an important way for the staff of Caregivers Nova Scotia to keep up to date on new ideas and techniques in caring for others. These meetings are held on an ongoing basis and always bring many valuable thoughts to the table! This smiling group attended our most recent get together in November 2023.



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Practicing Happiness

Therese Henman-Phillips, Caregiver Support Coordinator

Have you ever asked yourself, when will I ever be happy? There is a lot of pressure to be happy in this very complex world. If you are a caregiver, chances are a lot of your life is on pause. In social media we see everyone else's curated version of happiness, and we might be influenced to compare our life to these commercial or social images. That's challenging especially if your role is limiting you currently.

Generally, we tend to think of happiness in extremes of the overall state of being happy or not. Yes, there are those people we meet who seem to have that naturally happy personality but realistically most others probably experience many states during their lifetime. I think our overall goal in life is to have more moments of happiness than not. It's unrealistic however to expect euphoria. Many will spend their life seeking this only to be disappointed.

More typically, people tend to experience a wide range of emotions and understand that the moments that are not associated with happiness, are temporary. Extreme challenges may be a sign to seek professional support. But generally speaking, can we cultivate our happiness? Some experts would suggest that by focusing on small moments of happiness instead of the

overall concept, we can increase the positive in our lives that we might otherwise overlook. Scientifically speaking, our bodies respond to these happy moments similarly to how our body might react to a negative trauma or trigger moments-but for the positive. The spin-offs for our overall health and satisfaction however are more beneficial.

I recently saw a quote that I think best describes this concept and one that I want to share with you today: "Today I learned about a term called a "glimmer". Which is the opposite of a trigger. Glimmers are those moments in your day that make you feel happiness, peace, or gratitude. Once you train your brain to be on the lookout for glimmers, these tiny moments will appear more and more". (unknown author)

The concept of glimmers was promoted by Deb Dana, LCSW (2018). As humans, we tend to focus on the negative. It requires effort to retrain and shift our mindset into this new way of thinking. Approaching life as a journey and not a destination has many benefits. Going forward, make time for those glimmers. Glimmers may be small, like taking in the beauty of the fall foliage, but the reward to our physical and mental health will be large!

"Are They Still Safe To Drive?"

Leanne Taylor, Caregiver Support Coordinator



Caregivers want to respect the independence of the person they care for as long as possible, but also feel responsible to determine what is and what isn't safe for them. Caregivers

supporting someone with dementia and other conditions that affect cognitive ability find it difficult to judge what the person still can do and cannot do. Caregivers are often asking "Are they still safe to drive?"

Here are some questions to consider when making this assessment:

- Is there a change in the person's health that affects their reflexes or motor skills?
- Does the person have a loss of focus or direction?
- Is there a loss of hearing or sight?
- Is the person still able to make good decisions?
- Is the person able to react and stay calm in a stressful situation?
- Has any new medication been prescribed or has there been a change with a medication that may have side effects that cause impairment with their ability to drive?
- Have you noticed a change in the person's cognitive ability?

Here are some suggestions to help:

- If you are able have a conversation with the person without causing tension, this would be a good first step. Suggest they have a conversation with their health care provider to see if it is still safe for them to be driving. If this is not possible, it may be time for you to have a conversation with their health care provider.
- The loss of driving causes a loss of independence, and support may be needed. Having a plan to allow the person to maintain some level of independence can be helpful. Create a support team that to help fill the void, consider family, friends, rural transportation services, and public transportation.
- Create a plan to avoid social isolation. There are programs to promote social wellness as well as respite options.

Driving is a privilege, and the safety of our roads is everyone's responsibility. Giving up driving is a loss and is very difficult decision to make. If you are interested in more resources to help with this decision please reach out to us. We are here to help!

Reference: https://811.novascotia.ca/health_topics/driving-skills-in-older-adults/

Honoring Your Needs While Tending To Another's Needs

Lyn Stuart, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Cape Breton

Caregivers are touted as the selfless unsung heroes of our communities. Giving themselves to their care recipients, tirelessly, they are part of the glue that holds our communities and health care system together.

Not without its cost, caregiving can be all-encompassing labor of love and/or duty. When you're at your full capacity in caring for another person, what happens to your needs?

How can we, as a collective of caregivers, ensure that we honor our needs as we tend to other's needs?

We hear that at times caregivers are not seen as valued members of the care team. They are not consulted on what their needs are by their primary care practitioners and other members of the care team. Without recognition, caregivers can feel invisible, which can make their needs invisible too. As caregivers balance the many spinning plates, often the same plate drops over and over again - *their own needs*. How can caregivers remember to honor their own needs with all they are up against?

It would be remiss if I didn't mention the roadblocks. Time, energy, and support to name a few along with guilt and ability to step away. Would it be fair to say it is easier to ignore our needs than to address them?

To begin to create a balance between caring for yourself while caring for others: start small. Read our [Where to Begin Guide](#) (even if you aren't beginning your journey) and put everything down on paper. Take note of who is doing what. Are there any shifts that can be made? Boundaries to create? Often people want to help, they just don't know the how, when or what. Asking for help is the bravest action you can make - reach out. Be specific. Practice saying no.

Try some self-reflection:

- How are you doing?
- How do you feel about how you are showing up for yourself?
- Can you add one thing into your day that will help fill your own cup as you provide care for your person?
- How can you celebrate yourself and all that you have done today?
- Can you let go of one thing that doesn't serve you and pass one thing on to someone else?

To consider when tending to your own needs:

- Remember, your needs are not a suggestion. They are sustenance.
- Strive for progress, not perfection. You are a human, not a robot!
- Any action is better than no action at all. Small moments of tending to yourself add up.
- You are worthy of the same love and care you give every day.
- You deserve the same help that you provide to others.
- Practice self-compassion.

Feel free to use this wellness prescription, or create your own.

1. Gratitude practice. 1 x day
2. 15-minute brisk walk. 4-5 x week
3. Mindful breathing. 2 minutes each day
4. Connection. 2 minutes each day.
5. Ritualize the practice of checking in with yourself every day.
6. Reach out to your Caregiver Support Coordinator - we are here to help!



Probate

Jenine Wilson, Caregiver Support Coordinator

I had a caregiver ask me at a support group for suggestions on how to avoid probate as they were dealing with a relative's estate that was taking years to resolve. This caregiver wanted to ensure the same process would not happen to their own executor.

With no answer readily available, I did some research. I am far from knowing the intricacies of estate planning but this is a simplified condensed version of what I have learned. Please remember this is not legal advice. Consult an estate lawyer or contact the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia for more information.

The Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia defines probate as "a legal process that establishes that a will is the valid last will of the person who died. It is also the process that governs management and distribution of an estate, whether or not there is a will. A grant of probate or administration is a document from Probate court that gives a personal representative legal authority to deal with the estate." Dealing with the estate may mean selling a property or transferring deed and closing accounts to distribute money to heirs. You cannot do any of these things without a probate grant. There is a cost for the probate process. The larger the estate the larger the cost for probate. The process may be different in other provinces.

Simply stated, the best way to avoid the process of probate is to not have any assets when you die or have assets that are not a part of the estate. If you have an estate with a value of less than \$25,000, it may qualify for a small estate probate. This process is faster and less expensive than regular probate.

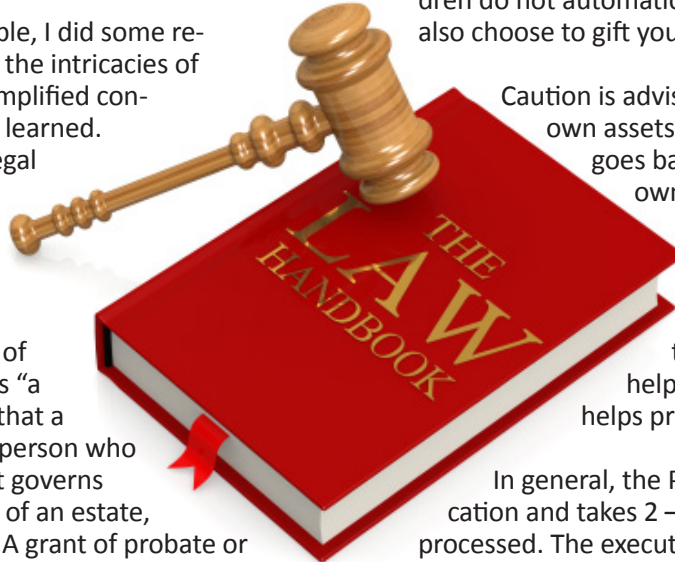
Assets that are not a part of the estate are assets with a named beneficiary, like pension plans and life insurance also, jointly owned assets like homes and bank accounts. Assets shared with spouses or minor children go directly to surviving owner. However, shared assets with others such as adult children do not automatically go to the surviving owner. You can also choose to gift your assets while you are still alive.

Caution is advised when deciding whether to jointly own assets. If the person you jointly own with goes bankrupt or there is a divorce your jointly owned asset is counted in that person's assets.

Stating exclusions in your will (people in your immediate family who are not to receive any part of the estate) can help avoid the will being contested which helps probate move forward.

In general, the Probate process starts with an application and takes 2 – 4 months for the application to be processed. The executor will get a grant of Probate which enables them to deal with CRA and others. After this a notice is put in to the Royal Gazette for 6 months where creditors may come forward. Followed by a notice to heirs. Once the CRA signs off (which can take many months) and the executor gets a clearance certificate, assets can be distributed to heirs and fees paid to executor which is generally 5%. All this can take from 9 months to a year.

Most importantly, use this information as a starting place to ask questions of an estate lawyer, financial planner, or the Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia.



Caregivers and Research Opportunities

Often, Caregivers Nova Scotia is asked to help recruit caregivers to participate in a variety of research projects, from surveys and questionnaires to focus groups. We also know that caregivers are very busy, and we don't want to add to your "To do" list or clutter your email inbox with requests.

However, we also know that your voice is important and that caregivers need to be at these tables, helping shape policy, strategies, and resources to assist them. And we know that there are those of you out there who would love to participate in these opportunities!

We are therefore creating a distribution list of caregivers who are interested in participating in some of these research opportunities. If this is you, please let us know by emailing us at Info@CaregiversNS.org and we'll add you to the list. Thank you!



Welcome Lisa Knocton!



I am excited to join Caregivers Nova Scotia as Caregiver Support Coordinator for Eastern HRM. My professional education is in Social Work. I have worked in health-care for 20+ years in community care with people impacted by chronic illness, cognitive impairments and disabilities. On a personal level, my own family members were impacted by life threatening illness, Alzheimer's disease, and stroke. I am aware of the stress, anxiety and uncertainty associated with caregiving.

Unpaid Caregivers are the backbone of long term care providing countless hours of care to loved ones so they can remain at

home and have a good quality of life. Caregiving can bring about satisfaction but it can also be stressful, lonely, and overwhelming. Unpaid caregivers are usually family members such as a spouse, daughter, son or close friend.

I am looking forward to doing my best to support caregivers in their journey of caregiving.

We are thrilled to have Lisa joining our team.

Find Lisa at EasternHRM@CaregiversNS.org or via phone at 1.782.321.5744.

Welcome Sheila Landry!



I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to fill a term role with Caregivers Nova Scotia in the Western Region. I am a new retiree from a career helping support individuals with intellectual disabilities in both residential and vocational settings, a career of which I am very proud. I still have the need to support others. With Caregivers Nova Scotia I hope to build my knowledge from this amazing supportive team to help others within my own community.

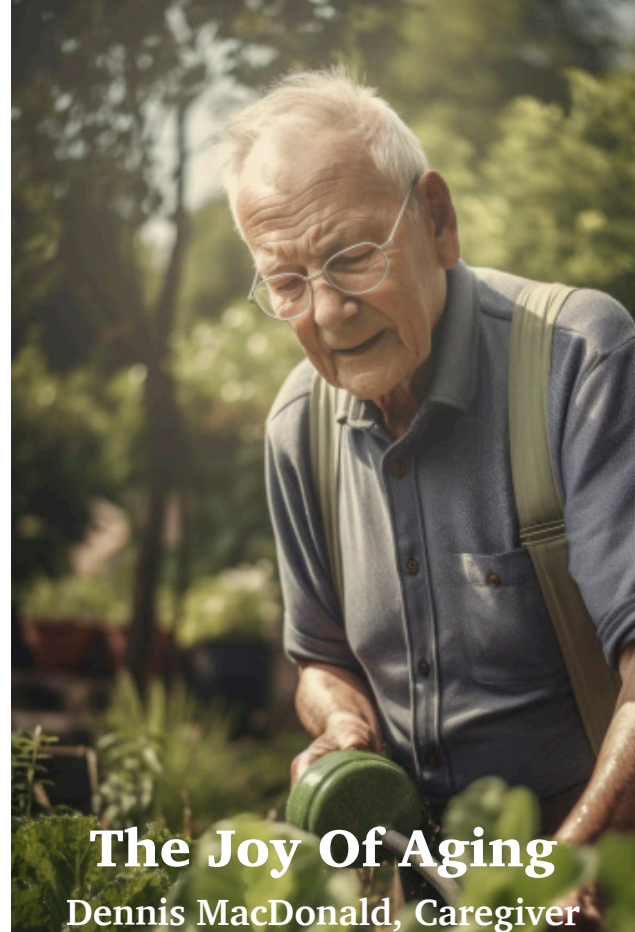
I am mom of 5 amazing children and as of now a grammie of 6 beautiful grandchil-

dren. Living away for all my married life in Ontario, Newfoundland and Cape Breton. It is an amazing feeling to be in my home community with the opportunity to meet and connect in a meaningful way.

As a caregiver to several family members, I understand the frustrations of trying to navigate through the system to find adequate supports. The load can sometimes be heavy and isolating. None of us were meant to walk this path alone. I am grateful to have the opportunity to share some of my knowledge with others while providing support, education and advocacy to those who need it. I look forward to your calls, emails and meeting you in support groups in Chester, Bridgewater and Liverpool. I am only too happy to help where I can.

We are thrilled to have Sheila joining our team.

Email Sheila at Western@CaregiversNS.org or via phone at 902-514-1281.



The Joy Of Aging

Dennis MacDonald, Caregiver

'Getting old' was fine...
For a while.
It was when 'being old'
Became the reality
That the fun ceased.
Becoming eccentric felt good
Knowing that it wasn't really.
It was just me, daring
To be myself
Getting old was okay
While I paddled the kayak
With the herons at dawn
Walked the ten
Felt the strain as pleasure
Panted up the hill
Knew I'd be in shape soon
The ten pounds dropped
In time for spring.
Arthritis came
Before the virus
Parkinson's before that
I helped her as she slowed
Thankful to be able
But...caring ages too
As it ages
One may fret about 'ability'
Till it morphs and adds the 'dis-'

May 9, 2021

QTIP - A Caregiver's Guide to Emotional Resilience

JoAnne Connors, Caregiver Support Coordinator, Capital Region



QTIP, which stands for “Quit Taking It Personally,” is an important concept and tool for caregivers to develop emotional resilience and maintain their well-being in the face of the demanding responsibilities and challenges that come with caregiving. Caregivers often find themselves overwhelmed by the emotional and physical demands of their role, leading to stress, misunderstandings, and conflicts. Here, we will explore the concept of QTIP and its benefits, as well as provide practical steps to help caregivers build emotional resilience.

The Concept of QTIP:

Emotional Detachment: QTIP encourages caregivers to detach themselves emotionally from the actions, reactions, and behaviors of the care recipient. It's essential to understand that these behaviors are often a result of their medical condition, pain, or frustration, rather than a reflection of the caregiver's worth or abilities.

Avoiding Over-Identification: Caregivers may unintentionally internalize the issues they encounter while caregiving. They might feel responsible for the care recipient's happiness, health, or overall well-being, leading to unnecessary stress. QTIP helps caregivers remember that they are there to provide care and support, but they can't control or be responsible for everything.

Benefits of Practicing QTIP:

Reduced Stress: QTIP allows caregivers to distance themselves from the emotional turmoil that caregiving can bring. By not taking everything personally, they can reduce their stress levels and maintain a healthier perspective.

Better Decision-Making: Emotional detachment helps caregivers make more objective and rational decisions regarding the care of their loved ones. This can lead to more effective caregiving and improved overall well-being for both parties.

Improved Communication: By not taking things personally, caregivers can engage in more productive and less confrontational communication with their care recipients, other family members, and healthcare professionals. This can lead to smoother interactions and better collaboration.

Practical Steps to Build Emotional Resilience Through QTIP:

Self-Reflection: Take time to reflect on your emotions and reactions. Recognize when you're feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or taking things personally. This self-awareness is the first step in implementing QTIP.

Set Realistic Expectations: Understand the limitations of your role as a caregiver. You cannot control every aspect of the care recipient's life or health, and it's okay not to be perfect.

Practice Self-Care: Caring for yourself is just as important as caring for your loved one. Make time for activities that relax and rejuvenate you. Seek support from friends, family, or support groups.

Seek Support: If you find that caregiving is significantly affecting your mental health and well-being, consider joining a Support Group, consulting a therapist or counselor. They can provide strategies to help you cope with the emotional challenges.

Stay Informed: Educate yourself about the condition of the care recipient and available resources. The more you know, the better prepared you'll be to handle the challenges that arise.

In conclusion, practicing QTIP, or “Quit Taking It Personally,” is a valuable tool for caregivers to build emotional resilience. By detaching emotionally from the challenges of caregiving and setting realistic expectations, caregivers can reduce stress, make better decisions, and improve communication. Remember that taking care of yourself is essential to providing quality care to your loved one, and seeking support is a valid and beneficial step when needed. Caregiving is a challenging role, and practicing QTIP can help caregivers navigate it with more balance and grace.

QTIP - Guide de la résilience émotionnelle à l'intention des proches aidants

JoAnne Connors, Coordinatrice du soutien aux aidants

Le QTIP, qui signifie « Quit Taking It Personally », est un concept et un outil important qui permet aux proches aidants de développer leur résilience émotionnelle et de maintenir leur bien-être face aux responsabilités et aux défis exigeants qui accompagnent la prestation de soins. Les proches aidants se retrouvent souvent submergés par les exigences émotionnelles et physiques de leur rôle, ce qui entraîne du stress, des malentendus et des conflits. Dans cet article, nous explorerons le concept du QTIP et ses avantages, ainsi que des étapes pratiques pour aider les proches aidants à renforcer leur résilience émotionnelle.

Le concept du QTIP :

Détachement émotionnel : Le QTIP encourage les aidants à se détacher émotionnellement des actions, des réactions et des comportements du bénéficiaire de soins. Il est essentiel de comprendre que ces comportements sont souvent le résultat de leur état de santé, de leur douleur ou de leur frustration, plutôt que le reflet de la valeur ou des capacités de l'aidant.

Éviter la suridentification : Les proches aidants peuvent involontairement interioriser les problèmes qu'ils rencontrent pendant qu'ils prodiguent des soins. Ils peuvent se sentir responsables du bonheur, de la santé ou du bien-être général du bénéficiaire de soins, ce qui entraîne un stress inutile. Le RAQ aide les proches aidants à se rappeler qu'ils sont là pour fournir des soins et du soutien, mais qu'ils ne peuvent pas tout contrôler ou être responsables.

Avantages de la pratique du QTIP :

Réduction du stress : Le QTIP permet aux proches aidants de prendre de la distance par rapport à la tourmente émotionnelle que la prestation de soins peut apporter. En ne prenant pas tout personnellement, ils peuvent réduire leur niveau de stress et maintenir une perspective plus saine.

Meilleure prise de décision : Le détachement émotionnel aide les aidants à prendre des décisions plus objectives et rationnelles concernant les soins à apporter à leurs proches. Cela peut conduire à une prestation de soins plus efficace et à une amélioration du bien-être général des deux parties.

Amélioration de la communication : En ne prenant pas les choses personnellement, les aidants peuvent s'engager dans une communication plus productive et moins conflictuelle

avec leurs bénéficiaires de soins, les autres membres de la famille et les professionnels de la santé. Cela peut conduire à des interactions plus fluides et à une meilleure collaboration.

Étapes pratiques pour renforcer la résilience émotionnelle grâce au QTIP :

Réflexion sur soi-même : Prenez le temps de réfléchir à vos émotions et à vos réactions. Reconnaissez quand vous vous sentez dépassé, stressé ou prenez les choses personnellement. Cette prise de conscience de soi est la première étape de la mise en œuvre du QTIP.

Établissez des attentes réalistes : Comprenez les limites de votre rôle d'aidant. Vous ne pouvez pas contrôler tous les aspects de la vie ou de la santé du bénéficiaire de soins, et il est normal de ne pas être parfait.

Prenez soin de vous : Prendre soin de vous est tout aussi important que de prendre soin de votre proche. Prenez le temps de faire des activités qui vous détendent et vous rajeunissent. Cherchez du soutien auprès de vos amis, de votre famille ou de groupes de soutien.

Demandez de l'aide : Si vous constatez que la prestation de soins affecte considérablement votre santé mentale et votre bien-être, envisagez de vous joindre à un groupe de soutien, de consulter un thérapeute ou un conseiller. Ils peuvent vous fournir des stratégies pour vous aider à faire face aux défis émotionnels.

Restez informé : Renseignez-vous sur l'état de santé du bénéficiaire de soins et sur les ressources disponibles. Plus vous en saurez, mieux vous serez préparé à relever les défis qui se présenteront.

En conclusion, la pratique du QTIP, ou « Quit Taking It Personal », est un outil précieux pour les proches aidants afin de renforcer leur résilience émotionnelle. En se détachant émotionnellement des défis de la prestation de soins et en fixant des attentes réalistes, les proches aidants peuvent réduire le stress, prendre de meilleures décisions et améliorer la communication. N'oubliez pas qu'il est essentiel de prendre soin de vous pour fournir des soins de qualité à votre proche, et que demander de l'aide est une étape valable et bénéfique en cas de besoin. La prestation de soins est un rôle difficile, et la pratique du QTIP peut aider les proches aidants à s'y retrouver avec plus d'équilibre et de grâce.

Farewell

Brenda Sangster, Office Administrator

As I take a moment to reflect on my incredible 18-year journey with Caregivers Nova Scotia, my heart swells with a blend of emotions. This farewell carries a bittersweet mix of feelings, but as I move forward, I am steadfast in my belief that this is the right path.

Reflecting upon my years, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude. To all the exceptional individuals who have walked this path alongside me, you are not just colleagues but an extended family that has touched my life in immeasurable ways. Working with you has been an honour, and being a part of an organization as impactful as CNS has been a blessing.

I extend a heartfelt thank you to the caregivers whose stories have intertwined with mine. Your willingness to allow me into your lives, even for a fleeting moment, has been an honour of the highest order. Your unyielding strength, boundless compassion, and unwavering commitment to your loved ones have forever left an incredible mark on my heart. Your resilience and courage have inspired me, fueling my passion to make a meaningful difference.

As I step into the next chapter of my life, I want to impart a piece of wisdom that I hold dear: never hesitate to seek help

and support. The role of a caregiver can often feel isolating, but remember that the support of the CNS staff is an unwavering pillar. They are here to listen, guide, and offer a helping hand. You are never alone on this journey.

To the board members of CNS, I extend my heartfelt thanks for your unwavering support to the staff over the years. Your dedication has made a significant difference in our organization's success.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude goes out to every member of the CNS family. For 18 years, you have been a constant presence, shaping my experiences and forging memories that will forever be etched in my heart. As I bid farewell, I carry these moments as a source of strength and inspiration. I am confident that remarkable achievements will mark CNS's journey ahead, and I eagerly await news of the incredible strides the organization will continue to make.

I thank you from the depths of my heart for being an integral part of my life's journey, with warm wishes for the future and an enduring appreciation for the past.

Sincerely, Brenda



Caregivers Nova Scotia acknowledges that we live and work in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is governed by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. We are continually learning more about how to engage and move forward with the work of truth, reconciliation, and equity. We recognize that without action, an acknowledgment is empty. It marks the beginning of the work ahead of us, not the end. We are all treaty people.