

2025 Conference Report

Stronger Together

Connect and Collaborate for Safer Communities



November 4th - 6th, 2025,
Halifax, Nova Scotia



Canadian Centre for
Safer Communities



Centre canadien pour des
communautés plus sûres

A look back on our 2025 Annual Conference

At the Canadian Centre for Safer Communities (CCFSC), our vision is to help build communities where people not only are safe, but also feel safe. Through our annual conference, we brought together voices from across the country for an important conversation about the growing challenges of social polarization. We believe that when we connect and collaborate in a safe, evidence-informed environment, we strengthen our collective capacity to foster resilience, belonging, and inclusion. By learning from one another and working side-by-side, we can create meaningful, lasting impact in communities of all sizes.

The following pages reflect on - and celebrate - the 2025 conference, its insights, activities, and outcomes.



About our 2025 Conference

CCFSC hosted its 2025 conference on the ancestral and traditional lands of the Mi'kmaw people, colonially known as Halifax, Nova Scotia. The CCFSC annual conference brought together voices from across the country to discuss social polarization and community resilience. The three-day event offered insightful discussions, workshops, and networking to equip attendees to make a lasting impact.

155

participants

40

speakers &
presenters

2

performances

15

sessions &
presentations





Melanie Bania
Executive Director, Canadian
Centre for Safer Communities



Chris Giacomantonio
Assistant Professor of
Sociology, Dalhousie
University



Gavin Naime
Manager of Crime
Prevention, Public Safety
and Security Division, Nova
Scotia Department of
Justice



Colleen Cornock
Social Development Manager,
City of Kelowna



Kelly Husack
Director of Community
Initiatives, REACH Edmonton
Council for Safe Communities



Sabrina Paillé
Researcher and Evaluator,
Canadian Centre for Safer
Communities



Shamitha Devakandan
Community Safety Analyst



Zeina Ismail-Allouche
Director of Partnerships and
Program Development,
Canadian Practitioner
Network for the Prevention of
Extremist Violence



LaMeia Reddick
Founder of Bxckhouse Life
Studio



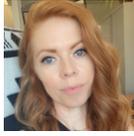
James Dixon
Social Development
Manager, City of Saskatoon



Bronte Jones
Team Lead of Social Planning,
City of Edmonton



Amy Siciliano
Public Safety Advisor,
Halifax Regional
Municipality



Cassandra Dokken
Director of Crime
Prevention, Public Safety
Division, Manitoba Justice



Kimm Kent
Co-founder and Director, Peer
Outreach Support Services &
Education



Damian Stoilov
Member of the Nova Scotia
House of Assembly for
Bedford South



Houssam Elokda
Managing Principal, Happy
Cities



Cameron Ketchum
Director of Community
Initiatives, United Way East
Ontario



Celeste Trianon
Founder and Director,
Juritrans



Amanda Eveson
Senior Manager of
Community Engagement,
City of Calgary



Jamie Livingston
Associate Professor, Saint
Mary's University



Erin Welk
Co-CEO, Urban Matters



Chantelle Edwards
Skills Development Lead,
Students Commission of
Canada



Rachel Locke
Co-founder and Acting
Executive Director, Peace in Our
Cities



Robert S. Wright
Assistant Professor, Saint
Mary's University



Andy Fillmore
Mayor of Halifax



Connie Marciniuk
Manager of Community
Safety, City of Edmonton



Caycee Zimmerman
Community Safety
Advisor, City of Kelowna



Jan Fox
Executive Director, REACH
Edmonton Council for Safe
Communities



Erin McEachran
Community Safety & Well-
Being Coordinator,
Municipality of Chatham-Kent



Kamil Ahmed
Emma Cagnet
Community Mobilization
Team
Youth panelists



Jocelyn Gallant
Coordinator, Skills
Development, & Site Lead,
Students Commission of
Canada



William (Bill) Moore
Commissioner of Public Safety,
Halifax Regional Municipality



Kadane Headley
Child and Youth Care
Practitioner



Kristin Mowatt
Community Safety
Coordinator, Norway House
Cree Nation

Speakers & Keynote

Robert S. Wright

Robert S. Wright delivered a thought-provoking and moving keynote that was well-received, effectively setting the tone for difficult conversations and challenging topics during the event.

Wright is a queer, African Nova Scotian Social Worker and Sociologist. His 36-year career has spanned diverse fields, including education, child welfare, forensic mental health, trauma, sexual violence, and cultural competence. Wright was an early practitioner of what has come to be known as Equity, Diversity and Inclusion work and developed a model for understanding and practicing Cultural Competence that continues to be a useful framework for the many practitioners and organizations that have used it.



YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

Listening to Youth Voices for Safer Communities

On November 4, 2025, twelve remarkable youth took the stage during the opening ceremony to share their insights on what would make Halifax a safer place. This session invited attendees to listen with mind, heart, and soul, centering the perspectives of young people as they expressed their aspirations for safer and more inclusive communities. The youth spoke candidly about where they feel safe, where they do not, and how they envision safety in Halifax.



Their message was clear: the city must hear and act on their recommendations to meaningfully enhance how young people navigate and experience Halifax. True violence prevention begins with creating environments where youth feel genuinely safe.



Inclusive People-Based Safety in Public Spaces

James Dixon from the City of Saskatoon talked about the Saskatoon Well-Being Employment Enterprise Program (SWEEP). The Sweep program provides supportive employment opportunities, for individuals with (or at risk of) gun violence or gang involvement. These employment opportunities are jobs related to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and include things like clean ups, graffiti removal, landscaping, and public art installation and maintenance. As a result, the city of Saskatoon has seen 16+ tonnes of waste removed since April 2025 and 54 public art installations that have either been set up, maintained, or repaired.

Erin Whelk from Kelowna spoke about their peer navigator project. In this project, individuals with lived experience become employed as peer navigators, working in meaningful positions within local organizations to support vulnerable community members. From April 2021 to March 2023, peer navigators interacted with over 2329 community members around topics like harm reduction, nutrition support, naloxone kits, cultural support, shelter referrals, social work support, and responding to toxic drug poisoning. The project has seen many important impacts such as increased sense of purpose for peers, increased capacity, access to an inclusive and supportive work environment, and access to low barrier cultural teachings.

Amanda Eveson spoke about the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation's (CMLC) objectives for urban densification, community renewal, beautification, as well as the washroom attendant program. This work included making walkable/bikeable paths, clean ups, creation of accessible public spaces, and public art installations. In addition to this, the public washroom program led to redesign and renovation, as well as the hiring of those with lived experience to be washroom attendants. There were over 35,000 visitors to the washroom in 10 months and zero incidents nor drug poisonings.

PROJECT UPSTREAM PRESENTS:

A Spotlight on Municipalities Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Partnerships to Prevent Extremist Violence in Canada

Project UPSTREAM (Upskilling Prevention by Strengthening Readiness, Engagement and Multisectorality) is a two-year project that aims to pilot and scale up local multi-sectoral partnerships across Canada to address issues of social polarization and hate that can lead to violence or violent extremism. But who is this project really for? Who does it seek to support, how, and why? Data can give us the answers but only stories can paint the picture.

This session featured champions from three of the ten municipalities engaged in Project UPSTREAM: Bronte Jones from the City of Edmonton, Erin McEachran from the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, and Kristin Mowatt from Norway House Cree Nation. They shared their diverse stories of hope, challenge, and vision for localized prevention of violent extremism. The panel was facilitated by Restorative Justice Practitioner and Project UPSTREAM Partner, Kamil Ahmed from Community Justice Initiatives of Waterloo Region.



Monitoring & Evaluation

- Integrating evaluation at all stages of projects
- Identifying common indicators for CSWB
- Soft launch of CUSM toolkit and website

Safety in Public Spaces

- Safety is not always the absence of harm, it can also include the presence of cohesion
- Safety looks different for different people

Preventing Hate, Social Polarization, & Extremism

- Grounding principles for approaches that are ethical, caring, and rooted in justice
- Prevention requires strong collaboration

CSWB Planning Process

- Examples of international & provincial approaches being implemented
- Similar challenges around implementation

Strengthening Collaboration & Partnerships

- Innovative approaches such as civilian-delivered mobile crisis services
- Presentation of Community Mobilization Teams
- Including youth voices & perspectives
- Collaborating with neighbourhoods

Listening to Youth Voices

- Offering youth true influence over decision-making for safety & well-being
- Co-creating youth spaces & participatory processes through art, music, poetry, etc.
- Violence prevention begins with creating social cohesion & belonging for youth.

We need everyone to make safer communities, and honestly every single session I've been a part of I've learned something from some people. Again I came with one co-worker, I've met a bunch of people at different tables even if I didn't think anything was gonna happen, the conversation exploded and I'm just taking these notes, taking all these things in. And just yeah I think the amount of resources that are out there, the amount of people who are working on maybe trying to solve the same problems I am, even if we don't have solutions yet it's just nice to know we're all kind of working toward a common goal and trying to figure out how to help each other. So yes I would encourage everyone to come!

Chantelle Edwards, Students Commission of Canada

The highlight for me has really been meeting people that are outside of my network. I mean, this is a conference that is across Canada. So you're not just focused on meeting people within your province. You're hearing challenges and different approaches from across the country!

Heather Pihulak, City of Kenora

As a restorative justice practitioner who works in a non-profit environment, it's really exciting to be in spaces like this to offer menus that may not exist within current public safety frameworks, that could lend themselves to community safety and well-being. It's been really exciting to hear from local youth who are engaged in community safety and well-being.

Kamil Ahmed, Community Justice Initiatives

This was my first conference with the CCFSC and I am in my first year as a CSWB Coordinator. Having a chance to meet other CSWB Coordinators and be exposed to the different stages of planning and implementation that we are all in was incredibly valuable. It was also wonderful to get to know the CCFSC staff better in person - I am extremely excited for Project Upstream and feel confident about the work.

Feedback survey respondent

Well done to the organizers in putting together a very thoughtful and engaging conference. I hope more people will attend in future.

Feedback survey respondent



A range of perspectives & experiences

At the end of the conference, participants were encouraged to fill out a feedback survey to share their thoughts and insights about the event and suggest improvements for future conferences.

Most respondents worked in municipal governments (57%) and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs, 11%). Additional sectors represented include provincial and/or territorial governments (2%),

police and law enforcement (11%), Indigenous organization or community (2%), and the research and academic sector (5%).

While participants joined us from all parts of Canada and from other countries, roughly 20% represented Halifax-based communities, organizations, and governments. This provided a critical local perspective and a meaningful connection to the host community.



Feedback survey results

35 conference attendees filled out the evaluation survey.

- Respondents reported high satisfaction levels regarding their experience at the conference (average of 8.5 out of 10)
- Respondents indicated a high likelihood of attending a future CCFSC conference (average of 9 out of 10)

All respondents indicated that...

The conference atmosphere, logistics and organization, and facilitation were good to very good

Conference sessions were somewhat to highly relevant to their work or interests

The conference helped them...

- *Learn new ideas or approaches*
- *Connect with practitioners, policymakers, or researchers*
- *Feel part of a national community of practice*
- *Reflect on their organization's approach to social cohesion and CSWB*
- *Identify actions to take following the conference*

Overall, the results indicate a **positive impact** on participants' knowledge across a range of CSWB topics, with a desire to learn more about policy engagement and advocacy, social polarization, and monitoring/evaluation.



Additional insights were collected through the feedback survey. The following observations from attendees will inform planning and delivery of future conferences:

- Valued the strong presence, participation and respectful engagement of youth
- Suitable diversity of topics and presenters
- Meaningful incorporation of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian perspectives and cultural elements, such as the participation of an Elder, drumming, and the exceptional key note by Robert S. Wright
- The networking opportunities and interactive workshops were valuable, and more of both would be appreciated
- In the future, sessions could be planned with an eye towards community size, as some initiatives cannot be scaled up/down in the same way
- We will continue to work on improving our conference's accessibility, for instance the location, venues, attendance fees, and transportation

Our sincere thanks to the Halifax Regional Municipality for hosting the 2025 Conference. We are deeply grateful to everyone whose hard work, dedication, and collaboration made this event possible.

A special thank you to the 2025 Conference Planning Committee: Amy Siciliano (Halifax Regional Municipality), Lillian Ash (Halifax Regional Municipality), Wendy Stone (Regina Police Service), Colleen Cornock (City of Kelowna), Elisabeth Miller (City of Saskatoon), Paul Lang (Kent Regional Service Commission), and Shefali Khoja (Strathcona County). Thank you to the CCFSC Knowledge Exchange Team: Jade Brazil, Audrey Monette, and Alexis Marcoux Rouleau.

Thank you to our conference emcees, Colleen Cornock and Melanie Bania, for guiding participants through the program with energy and care.

We are grateful to the CCFSC Board of Directors and our entire staff team for their support throughout the planning and delivery of the conference.

Our appreciation extends to Elder Geri for sharing wisdom and grounding the event; to local officials who offered welcome remarks; to all project partners who contributed to side events and sessions; to all speakers, keynote presenters, panelists, and moderators; to the performers who enriched our gathering; and to our sponsors.

Thank you to the youth participants who engaged in workshops and sessions, to all site visit hosts, and to the dedicated venue staff, caterers, and technical teams whose behind-the-scenes efforts ensured everything ran smoothly.

Finally, thank you to our CCFSC members and partners, both in Canada and internationally, and to every participant who joined us. Your presence, insights, and commitment made this conference a truly meaningful experience.



Thank You!

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