

*“A Communication  
Link with  
Foster Families  
Across the  
Province”*

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Families of NS  
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# Fostering Community Newsletter

Issue: 63

Spring/Summer 2025

## About Us:

The Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia is a charitable organization funded by the Nova Scotia Department of Opportunities and Social Development and governed by a board of directors who are foster caregivers.

## Mission Statement:

A collective voice supporting diverse foster families.

## Values:

***Commitment*** - *We value integrity, respect, and humility in our relationships with families, foster caregivers, and community partners.*

***Inclusion and Diversity*** - *We pursue equity in all aspects of our work. We act with courage in supporting the best interests of children in care.*

***Stewardship*** - *We strive for excellence and are accountable and transparent in being the collective voice for foster caregivers in Nova Scotia.*



2026 AGM  
May 29-31, 2026

Hosted by Northern Region  
Stay tuned for more info!

## Board of Directors

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Facebook group:  
[www.facebook.com/groups/FFFNS/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/FFFNS/)

# Greetings from the Board Chair

Greetings Fellow Caregivers,

I wish to advise that our new Executive Director, Susan Pace, has completed her probation period and has accepted the position on a permanent basis. Susan has been very helpful in her role assisting the Board of Directors, assisting foster caregivers, and is quickly learning her way around the office and the responsibilities that encompass her position. We look forward to working with her going forward so please reach out to congratulate her.

I want to thank the committee members involved in organizing our AGM in Liverpool on the weekend of May 30/31 and June 1<sup>st</sup>. The weekend was very enjoyable with a great selection of community booths on Friday evening. The workshops on Saturday were very helpful in our roles as foster caregivers. The Department of Opportunities & Social Development presented the morning workshop named The Child & Family Wellbeing Practice Framework. During the presentation we were advised there will be a new restructured thinner CFW Policy & Procedure manual that will be available soon.

The afternoon sessions consisted of Understanding Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, Beyond the Behavior: Parenting Kids from Hard Places which talked about children with trauma (very informative), The Smartphone Effect: Understanding the impact of social media and smartphones on children and youth (another informative session that we see with effects on many children/youth) and Grief & Loss in the Fostering Experience. All good workshops but unfortunately you can't attend them all.

During our banquet, our former Executive Director, Gary Landry was presented with the Honorary Foster Parent Award. During his time as our Executive Director, Gary worked hard to support caregivers whenever requested and was deserving of this honor. Big CONGRATULATIONS to Gary.

Staying with the AGM, it was announced we have a "new" Foster Caregiver Compassion Committee. There was also an email/mailout, "Did You Know" from Past Chairperson Rob Richardson highlighting this committee. This was set up to recognize and support foster families during important and significant life events. If you can't find the email/mailout and require more information, please contact [compassionontheway@gmail.com](mailto:compassionontheway@gmail.com). The committee worked well together in putting this in place and they did a remarkable job. WELL DONE.

For those who were unable to attend our Sunday morning meeting, it was also announced that the Department of Opportunities & Social Development (formerly known as the Department of Community Services) has requested two additional board seats for "community members" be added to the makeup of the Board of Directors and become part of our Service Agreement. You will be receiving more information regarding this request so you can make an informed decision. You, the foster caregiver will be included in the decision-making process early in the Fall. Details will be sent to every caregiver home, and I respectfully ask you review the information before making your decision. Board members will also host meetings that you can attend to voice your concerns and/or show support for the request. Full details will be sent out when finalized so please review correspondence from your Federation.

I would like to leave you with my email address, if you ever want to reach out with a question or if you want to express concerns or have an idea for improving foster care in Nova Scotia. For whatever reason, I can be reached at [ffnsboardmemberwf@outlook.com](mailto:ffnsboardmemberwf@outlook.com).

Looking forward to working with our board members on your behalf. I hope you all have a wonderful summer.

Wendell Fraser, FFFNS Board Chairperson



# Executive Director's Report

Hello Foster Caregivers!

This is my first newsletter as Executive Director since joining the Federation the beginning of January 2025. I want to begin by extending a huge thank you to the Board, foster caregivers, and FFFNS Staff for welcoming me into this new role.

The summer season is fast approaching; fingers crossed that the weather will cooperate and provide opportunities for everyone to get outside and enjoy activities. It is a busy time with juggling schedules and activities; balancing the responsibilities of caregiving with self care can be challenging but is essential to maintaining your well being.

The FFFNS AGM and Symposium 2025 occurred on May 30,31 and June 01 at the Best Western in Liverpool this year. The theme this year, in keeping with the location, was: *"All Hands on Deck... working together to support every child."* I would like to thank the AGM planning committee and the FFFNS staff for the planning and organization of this event. I would also like to extend a sincere thanks to the community booths that attended on Friday evening, along with the entertainment and workshop presenters. These sessions were well attended and provided the opportunity for foster caregivers to add tools to their toolboxes as foster caregivers.

A special thank you to Shawn Feener, who joined us bright and early on Saturday morning to host a "Medicine Walk" which involved identifying traditional medicinal plants, learning about their uses in Mi'kmaw healing practices, and strengthening our understanding of the interconnectedness of all living beings.

Another special thank you goes out to Ken Fells who entertained us at the banquet with the playing of the ***djembe***; a musical instrument considered to be a cultural and spiritual tool used for centuries to bring people together, promote healing, and foster a sense of community. I would also like to extend a big thank you to Jolene Wood, Foster Caregiver from the Western Region who was part of the AGM planning Committee and who made the lovely t-shirts that were drawn for as door prizes.

The following four individuals were recognized at this year's AGM as Honorary Foster Caregivers: Gary Landry-retired Executive Director FFFNS; Brian and Brenda Wolfe -retired foster caregivers (Brian is a FFFNS trainer); and Dr James Chandler. Congratulations to all!

Next year's AGM/Symposium will be taking place in the **Northern Region**. We are currently working on confirming the dates and location. As always, we welcome your participation and feedback as we plan for next year's event.

On another note, the **Training Program** is busy working on ensuring that all foster caregivers receive the updated Sensitivity Training. This training is being offered within the Constellations. The FFFNS program continue to work on connecting with all foster caregivers to ensure they receive CPI Training. Foster caregivers are encouraged to contact the FFFNS Office to register for First Aid Training. During the upcoming year, the Training Program will be examining other learning opportunities such as Lunch and Learn's on topics related to your role as a foster caregiver.

**The Ambassador Program** is in the planning stages. Look for more information regarding this program in the Fall. The goal of this program is to raise awareness about foster caregiving in Nova Scotia and recruit new, diverse foster homes. We will be seeking current and former foster caregivers and individuals with care experience who are passionate about sharing their fostering journey and becoming champions of foster care.

**The Focus on Fostering Meetings** are being reviewed including the Terms of Reference with the plan to move forward in the Fall. This will provide myself and Georgeina MacKinnon who has just recently resumed her position as Coordinator of Foster Care beginning June 01, 2025, to meet and plan for these meetings on a go forward basis.

**HUB Home Virtual Support Meetings** continue to occur monthly and are facilitated by Jill Martin, Social Worker FFFNS. These meetings provide the opportunity for HUB homes from across the province to come together to share ideas and provide peer support.

Jill Martin is the **Allegation and Support Social Worker**, she acts as an advocate and support person to foster caregivers facing allegations of abuse or neglect. Foster parents requiring assistance can contact Jill directly at (902) 424-2711 or 1-888-845-1555. You will also see Jill at Pre-service trainings across the province which she attends to provide new foster caregivers with information regarding her role.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to the Federation should you have questions or concerns as a foster caregiver. You can reach me at [susan.pace@novascotia.ca](mailto:susan.pace@novascotia.ca) or by calling me at 902.424.2043. Remember it is important to speak with your foster care social worker and supervisor first about any concerns that you may have. I am available to attend meetings with you should you want or need that support.

To access information regarding the Federation of Foster Families of Nova Scotia and communications from Department of Opportunities and Social Development please visit the FFFNS website <https://fosterfamilies.ns.ca/> and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/FFFNS>)

We are working on updating our website to provide you with the most up to date information.

**The Federation of Foster Families (FFFNS)** is here to support you in your role as foster caregivers. Fostering can be challenging and demanding but at the same time a very rewarding experience. It is important that you feel supported in your role. We want to hear from you as to how we can best support you.

Thank you for all that you do as foster caregivers.

Kindest regards,



Susan Pace,  
Executive Director, FFFNS





### Attention Hub Home Caregivers!

The Federation hosts monthly hub home peer support meetings online on the 4<sup>th</sup> or last Tuesday of each month. The invitation with the link to join the virtual meeting (via Microsoft Teams) is sent approximately 2 weeks before the meeting (and a reminder email is sent the morning of the meeting as well). Meetings are over lunch time to hopefully allow those who are at work during the day to join in.

These meetings are a great opportunity to chat with other hub homes about challenges you've faced and how you've tackled them, swap ideas for gatherings, share information, and provide support to one another in this unique role you are all engaged in. Please join us whenever you are available!

Jill Martin, MSW, RSW  
Foster Allegation & Support Social Worker

### Hub Home Shoutout!

We would like to give a huge shout out to Jo and Raymond Cataford. They are our Hub Home in Annapolis County. They have organized so many fun events such as ice skating, bowling, and Pete's Snakes, just to name a few. They also welcomed us into their home where we have had some pretty tasty meals. So thank you for being our Hub Home and know how much it is appreciated!

Bev and Micheal Taylor



## 2025 HONORARY FOSTER PARENTS

Every year the Federation honors an individual or individuals who have contributed to the positive promotion of the Federation of Foster Families and foster care in Nova Scotia.

The award recipients this year were:

1. Brenda & Brian Wolfe- Brenda & Brian fostered for 35 years. In addition to their time spent fostering, they have also dedicated many hours as foster parent trainers with Brian continuing to volunteer after their home closed. Thank you Brenda & Brian for all of your years of dedication.
2. Dr. James Chandler - Dr. Chandler is a retired psychiatrist from the Yarmouth area. His clinical speciality in child and adolescent psychiatry has led him to help many children in care over the years. Dr. Chandler made himself available after hours and on short notice on many occasions when foster caregivers reached out. Thank you Dr. Chandler for your commitment to your patients.
3. Gary Landry - As many know, Gary was the Executive Director of the Federation for 15 years and provided support to many foster caregivers over that time. Before he came to the Federation he was Executive Director at the Yarmouth Child Welfare Agency. Thank you Gary for your commitment to foster caregivers, children in care, and the foster care community.







## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

### *Essentials for Foster and Adoptive Families*

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a range of hidden, lifelong brain and full-body disorders that can result from prenatal exposure to alcohol. There is no cure, and no known safe amount of alcohol use. Children and youth with FASD have a combination of cognitive, health, and mental health issues that challenge them in adapting to new situations. Foster and adoptive homes must be trauma-informed, and understand that children with FASD may operate at half their chronological age. Research indicates that *at least 3 - 11% of children in care have FASD.* (CanFASD, 2020).

#### Transitions

Children and youth with FASD often have problems with **transitions**. Moving from one situation to another, changing foster placements, meeting new caregivers or teachers can all create anxiety and behavioural symptoms.

#### Structure/ Consistency

Structure and consistency are keys to success for children with FASD. Routines, schedules, (backed up with visual cues), along with reminders when something is about to change, are all good practices.

#### Dysmaturity

Would you ask an 8-year-old to do what you are asking of a 16-year-old? Young people with FASD are often operating with social skills, communication, daily living skills and language skills at half their chronological age.

#### Responding to “Behaviours”

Disregulation and “behaviours” are a child’s way of telling you they can’t do what you are asking of them. Interpret behaviours as “**symptoms**” of the disorder. They are not intentionally giving you a bad day, *they are having a bad day.*

#### Concrete Thinking

Children and youth with FASD tend to be concrete thinkers. They do not see options; they make only one decision. They need **small chunks** of information, retaught in different domains, and repeated, even when it seems they “get it”.

#### Consequences

Difficulty with cause and effect reasoning and predicting make consequences and punishments **ineffective** for many children with FASD. Consider other teaching and parenting tools whenever possible. Learn and avoid behaviour triggers.

#### Supervision

From a very early age, children with FASD tend to be “runners”. They also get in trouble in unstructured or unsupervised settings. They need **constant supervision**, at home, at school, and in the community. “Eyes on”...*Always!*



## Resources from Kathleen Murphy of Norwood Counselling

For more information, please visit <https://www.norwoodcounselling.ca>

### **Podcasts**

“Attachment Nerd Cast” by Eli Hardwood

“The fearless foster parenting podcast” with Cathleen Bearse (specific to mom's unfortunately)

“Connected Parenting” by Jennifer Kolari

### **Books for Self-Care:**

“The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion: Freeing yourself from Destructive thoughts and emotions” by Christopher K Germer

“Self-Compassion: Stop beating yourself up and leave insecurity behind” by Kristen Neff

### **Books Parenting (Attachment):**

“Raising securely attached kids” by Eli Hardwood

“Raising the Secure Child” by Hoffman, Cooper & Powell

### **Did You Know?**

Reading children’s books about foster care can help kids make sense of their experiences—and feel less alone. Stories offer language for big feelings, normalize complex emotions, and open the door to connection and conversation. For children who’ve experienced trauma, books can become a safe way to explore identity, belonging, and trust at their own pace.

### **Kids Books**

“Room in the Nest” by Holly Marlow

“A Mother for Chocco” by Keiko Kasza

“No Matter What” by Josh Shipp

### **Did You Know?**

In foster care, regulation must come *before* connection—and connection must come *before* correction. When a child’s nervous system is in survival mode, they can’t access reasoning, empathy, or learning. Trauma-responsive parenting isn’t about being permissive—it’s about helping kids feel safe enough to *co-regulate*, connect, and then learn.



# 10 Ways to Help a Grieving Child

- 1. Take care of you** -- Exercise, eat well-balanced meals, stick to regular routines and reach out to others for support. These activities might be difficult when you are grieving, but taking care of yourself is still important. Grieving children do better when they have a healthy adult providing support and understanding to them.
- 2. Be honest with your child** -- Discuss the tragic event with your child in a simple, direct and age appropriate manner. Be honest and share clear, accurate information about what happened. Children need to hear the truth from someone they love.
- 3. Listen** -- Listen to your child share his or her story about what happened. Let them ask you questions and answer their questions as best as you can. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know."
- 4. Acknowledge your child's grief** -- recognize that your child is grieving. Be careful not to impose your grief on your child, but allow him or her to grieve in his or her own way. It is normal for children to feel an array of emotions, including sadness, anger, frustration and fear. It is also normal for children to move in and out of grief reactions, at times being very upset or getting angry easily and at other times playing as if nothing has happened. If you are not sure how grief is impacting your child, spend time with them playing, coloring, drawing or sharing stories. Quite often children will give you clues to their grief through these activities.
- 5. Share** -- Tell your child stories about your own life. Times you were afraid, sad or angry. Tell them how you dealt with these situations and what you learned. Children love to hear stories about the adults in their lives and when those adults were children. Sharing stories helps a child normalize what he or she is experiencing.
- 6. Be creative** -- Give your child a creative outlet to express feelings. This can be done through drawing, writing, doing crafts, listening to music, or playing games.
- 7. Maintain clear expectations** -- Keep rules and boundaries consistent. Children gain security when they know what is expected from them. Children will often use their pain as an excuse for inappropriate behavior. While you should always acknowledge the grief your child is experiencing, you should also teach them to be accountable for their choices, no matter how they feel.
- 8. Reassure your child** -- Remind your child that he or she is loved and that you are there for him or her. Following the death of a person in his or her life, a child's sense of safety can be shaken. Children often fear that you or other people in their life might die. While you cannot promise that you or others will not die, you can let your child know the plan if such an event occurs.
- 9. Create rituals and new family traditions** -- Rituals can give your family tangible ways to acknowledge your grief and honor the memory of those who have died. Lighting candles, recognizing special occasions, sharing stories about those who have died or volunteering with a local charity as a family are some of the ways you can incorporate new traditions or rituals.
- 10. Be patient** -- You and your child are grieving and the most intense parts of grief often take longer than we might want. Grief also changes us in many ways. So, be patient as you and your child experience your grief. Be patient with your child with repetition. A child often has to come back to the same details and questions. Patiently spend time with your child as they (and you) grow, change and continue to construct their (your) life story.

*Written by Pamela Gabbay, Ed.D., FT*

## Questions to Ask about Technology Use (From Unplugged Canada)

For more information, please visit <https://unpluggedcanada.com/>

### First think of **why** they're using Tech **Three C's of Technology Use**

#### Creating



Active use of their brains to learn something new and develop skills

#### Connecting



Leveraging technology to connect and build relationships

#### Consuming



Consuming content to avoid boredom, taking away from sleep, social interactions

### Think about **how** they're using tech

#### Consider Location



Are they using devices in open spaces (supervised) or are they plugged into a personal device alone in their room?

#### Consider Medium



Watching content on a TV in a room reduces risk of nearsightedness & neck issues compared to watching on a small device

#### Consider Frequency/Time



Occasional use for short periods of time provides exposure to tech without taking away too much time from other activities



## Training Update: Wrapping Up a Busy Season

We've just completed a jam-packed training season and are excited to share what's new! This year, we piloted our *Blended Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training* — a streamlined half-day session with an online component you can complete from home. Due to its success, we'll be offering it more widely this fall. Stay tuned!

The new Sensitivity training sessions are still being rolled out across the province by Constellation. You will be contacted by the Federation when training is being held in your area.

### Get Involved: Trainer & Guest Speaker Opportunities

Are you passionate about supporting other caregivers through training and shared experiences?

If you're interested in becoming a **Foster Caregiver Trainer**, we'd love to hear from you! Application forms are available on our website: [fosterfamilies.ns.ca/training](https://fosterfamilies.ns.ca/training)

We're also looking for **guest speakers** for our *Sensitivity Training Program*. If you have lived experience, professional insight, or a story to share that could inspire and educate others, please reach out to Shirley Howard at: [shirley.howard@novascotia.ca](mailto:shirley.howard@novascotia.ca)

Your voice can help shape stronger, more informed caregiving communities.

### Free First Aid Training for Foster Caregivers



Did you know? All foster caregivers in Nova Scotia are eligible for *free first aid training*!

Thanks to support from the Department of Opportunities and Social Development, the Federation covers registration costs, mileage and childcare reimbursement.

To register or learn about upcoming training dates, contact Michele Roberts at the Federation office: [michele.roberts@novascotia.ca](mailto:michele.roberts@novascotia.ca)

### Central Region Update

We've made it to summer, and the nicer weather has definitely been a welcome change.

The AGM went really well - it was so nice to connect with foster caregivers from across the province, meet some new faces, and catch up with familiar ones too. We had some great conversations, great presentations, and it was truly encouraging to hear your stories and see how many amazing people are out there caring for our kids. Thank you for all you do!

Our Association "Chicken and Chats" are still going strong - June was actually our biggest one yet! Thank you to everyone for showing up and staying connected. We are here to support each other.

As your Board Members, we are always happy to support you however we can, whether it's pointing you to the right resources or connecting you with the right people - never hesitate to reach out.

From your Central Region Board Members &  
Association Executive

Allie Pitre & Ann Jennex-Roberts



Hello Western Region Foster Caregivers!

With this being the last week of the school year, my hope is that you'll be able to enjoy some vacation time this summer! Congratulations to those in your home who are moving on to the next grade, graduating high school, or taking the next steps to post-secondary education.

As I shared at the AGM this past May, I wrapped up my term as Chair of the Board and want to congratulate Wendell Fraser for being elected as the new Chair. For my final year on the Board, I'll be serving in the Past Chair role to assist Wendell and to ensure a smooth transition.

Our next set of regional elections will be held in April 2026. I know that date may seem like it is far away in the distance, but if you have any questions about what it looks like serving on the Board, I'd love to have a conversation with you.

Please never hesitate to reach out to me if you have any foster related questions!

Kind regards,

Rob Richardson  
Past Chair, Western Region



Parks Canada is offering free admission and a 25% discount on fees for camping and overnight stays from June 20<sup>th</sup> to September 2<sup>th</sup>, 2025 inclusive.

For more information visit the Parks Canada website at:  
<https://parks.canada.ca/>



### **Parks Canada Sites in Nova Scotia:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site</li> <li>• Beaubassin and Fort Lawrence National Historic Site</li> <li>• Bloody Creek National Historic Site</li> <li>• Canso Islands National Historic Site</li> <li>• Cape Breton Highlands National Park</li> <li>• Charles Fort National Historic Site</li> <li>• D'Anville's Encampment National Historic Site</li> <li>• Fort Anne National Historic Site</li> <li>• Fort Edward National Historic Site</li> <li>• Fort McNab National Historic Site</li> <li>• Fort Sainte Marie de Grace National Historic Site</li> <li>• Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site</li> <li>• Georges Island National Historic Site</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grand-Pre National Historic Site</li> <li>• Grassy Island Fort National Historic Site</li> <li>• Halifax Citadel National Historic Site</li> <li>• Kejimujik National Park and National Historic Site</li> <li>• Marconi National Historic Site</li> <li>• Melanson Settlement National Historic Site</li> <li>• Port-Royal National Historic Site</li> <li>• Prince of Wales Tower National Historic Site</li> <li>• Royal Battery National Historic Site</li> <li>• Sable Island National Park Reserve</li> <li>• St. Peters Canal National Historic Site</li> <li>• Wolfe's Landing National Historic Site</li> <li>• York Redoubt National Historic Site</li> </ul> |
|---|--|





# Summer Fun in Nova Scotia

## Places to Visit in Northern Region:

- Sherbrooke Village
- Chedabucto Lifestyle complex
- Snow Queen Leisure World
- Simply Ducky Farms
- Columbus Field Spray Park
- Festival Antigonish Childrens' Summer Theatre
- Museum of Industry
- Hector Heritage Quay
- Decostes Art Centre
- Westville Shoebox Drive-in Theatre
- Balmoral Grist Museum
- Sugar Moon Farm
- Fundy Geological Museum
- Joggins Fossil Centre
- That Dutchman's Cheese Farm
- BurntCoat Head Park
- Shubenacadie Wildlife Park
- Mastodon Ridge
- Fisherman's Life Museum
- Tidal Bore rafting
- Stewiacke River Park
- Victoria Park
- River Breeze Farm
- Cowboy Town

## Places to visit in Eastern Region:

- Cape Breton Miners Museum
- Two Rivers Wildlife Park
- Donelda's Bird Island Puffin Tours
- Highland Village Museum
- Ingonish Gelato by Groovy Goat Farm Co.
- Gondola at Cape Smokey
- The Big Fiddle
- Sydney Mines Heritage Museum and Fossil Centre
- Oshan Whale Watch
- Captain Zodiac Whale Cruise
- St. Peter's Pirate Days

## Places to visit in Western:

- Mavillette Beach Provincial Park
- Le Village historique acadien de la Nouvelle-Écosse
- Noggins Corner Farm U-pick
- Shag Harbour UFO Incident Centre
- Black Loyalist Heritage Centre, Birchtown, Nova Scotia
- Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic
- Maud Lewis Replica House
- Brier Island Lighthouse
- Willowbank U-Pick Farm
- Ross Farm
- Tubing on the Gaspereau River
- Valley Drive In



Past and present collide in this exhibit!

Explore the biggest, most famous and feared aquatic predators through time with *Monsters of the Abyss*. Visitors will dive into the history of amazing prehistoric and modern day aquatic predators and learn about their ecology and why they were so feared. Learn about extinction level events, see the monsters in your own oceans, rivers and lakes that are still around today!

*Monsters of the Abyss* is on view from February 14 to September 7.

1747 Summer Street,  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
Canada B3H 3A6  
Phone: (902) 424-7353

**MONSTERS**  
— OF THE ABYSS —  
AQUATIC PREDATORS PAST + PRESENT

**Did you know the Museum of Natural History has Sensory Sundays?**

Autism Nova Scotia and the Museum of Natural History presents Sensory Friendly Sundays at the Museum every Sunday. During this time, you can enjoy all the museum has to offer, plus reduced lighting, reduced sound, sensory maps and social narratives.

*Prepared in Partnership with Autism NS*



**For more information, visit the website at :**  
**<https://naturalhistory.novascotia.ca/>**