



Annual Meeting

FREDERICTON

2026

June 11-13

*Deep roots.
Renewed growth.*



**Co-operative Management
Conference**

Self – awareness & Effective
Communication in Co-op Conflicts
Shawn Conway

Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that New Brunswick is situated on the unceded and unsurrendered territories of the Wolastoqey, Mi'gmaq, and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We seek to repair and rebuild meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples and honour these lands which hold the hopes of future generations.



Guidelines

- All questions are welcome and will help build our pool of knowledge
- Respect each other and give space to others
- Avoid identifying specific co-ops and workshop participants after
- What else?



What brings you here today?

- ❖ Your name and co-op experience
- ❖ Your challenges or difficult scenarios
- ❖ Your goals



Agenda

1. Conflict management starts with you
2. Approaches to dealing with conflict
3. Dynamics of conflict escalation
4. Your Toolbox: Presence, attitude, techniques
5. Practice
6. Delivering unwelcome news, I-messaging, setting boundaries
7. Practice



Thinking – honestly - about yourself

Think of a time when you were angry with someone and they with you.

What were you thinking and feeling?

What did you *feel like* saying or doing...
and what, in fact, did you do?

What are your default responses
to accusations, demands, put-downs
and hostility?



How would you respond?

- “Why can’t my sink be done? I have put in lots of work orders and lots of other units have new sinks and bathrooms. You’re just incompetent and it’s disgusting. I’m not leaving your office until you send Wally up to fix my sink right now!!”



Co-op Conflict

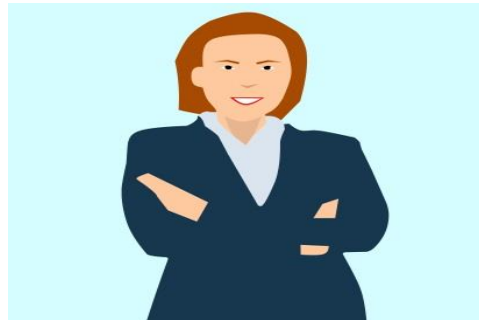
Conflict offers opportunities for:

- ❖ learning
- ❖ resolution and transforming difficult situations
- ❖ transforming relationships
- ❖ community development



Approaches to Conflict

Power Based: when pressure, force or coercion is used, e.g. use of authority, public pressure, strikes, physical force, etc.



- When is this approach useful in a co-op?



Approaches to Conflict

Rights Based: a general standard, or set of laws and rules is used to deal with a particular case, e.g. policies, laws, moral codes, etc.



- When is this approach useful in a co-op?



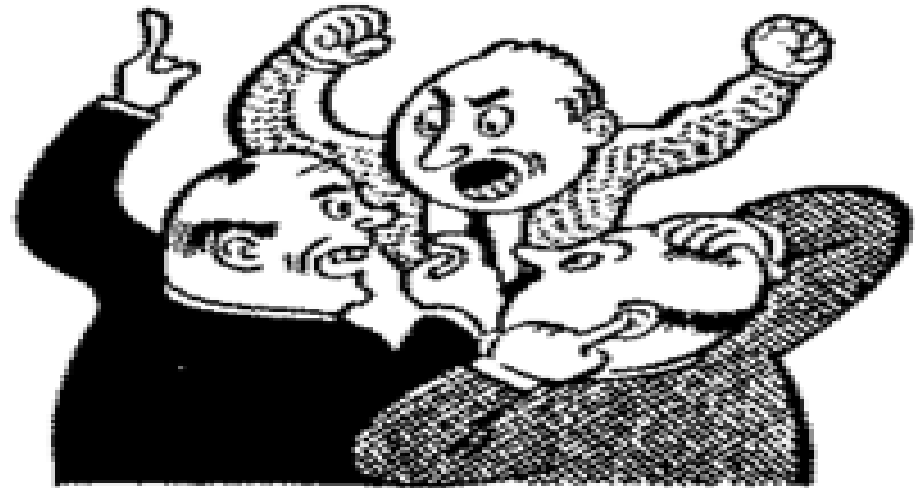
Approaches to Conflict

Interest Based: discovering the underlying needs and interests of people and creating solutions to meet as many needs as possible.

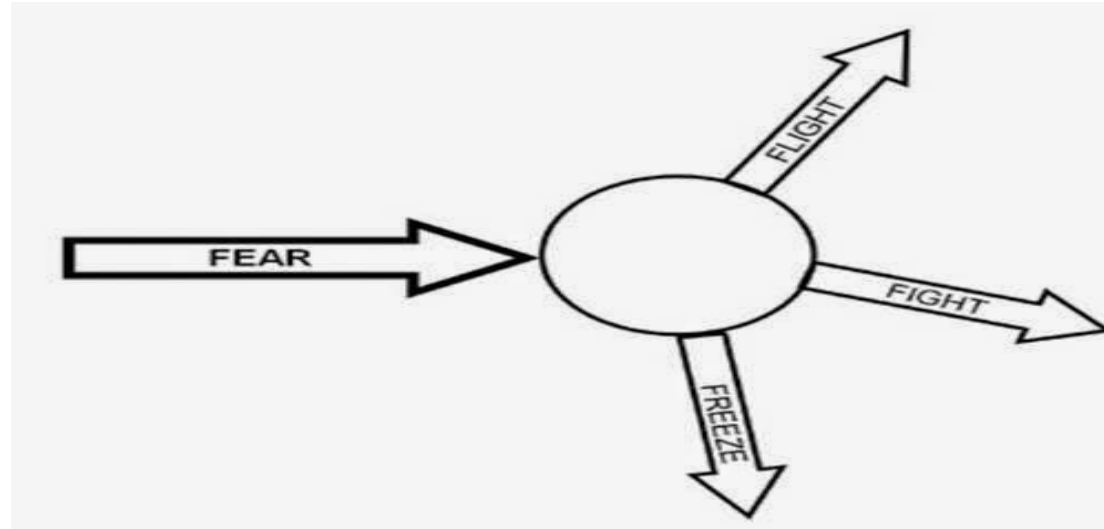
needs concerns beliefs values intentions
expectations assumptions hopes feelings



The Dynamics of Conflict Escalation



Evolution and Self Protection



- ❖ Perceived threats = the brain sounds an alarm, cascade of hormones
- ❖ Amygdala Hijack = Being “triggered”
- ❖ Self-protection = perspectives trapped into narrowed view
- ❖ Complex decision making disappears

The Dynamics of Conflict Escalation

- Others' demands, complaints and positions create fear that our needs may not be met.



The Dynamics of Conflict Escalation

- We protect our needs and what's important by:

Defending our behaviour, character, etc.

Attacking : criticising, threatening, insulting, minimizing others'

concerns, gathering allies.



Getting control of your brain

- Focus on your body
 - Breathe
 - Centre yourself
- Let go of the story
 - Be curious



Your Toolbox: Presence and Attitude

- Prepare and centre yourself (and stay centred)
- Depersonalize what the other is presenting
- Park your own feelings and reactions
- Adopt an attitude of curiosity: lean in, pay attention



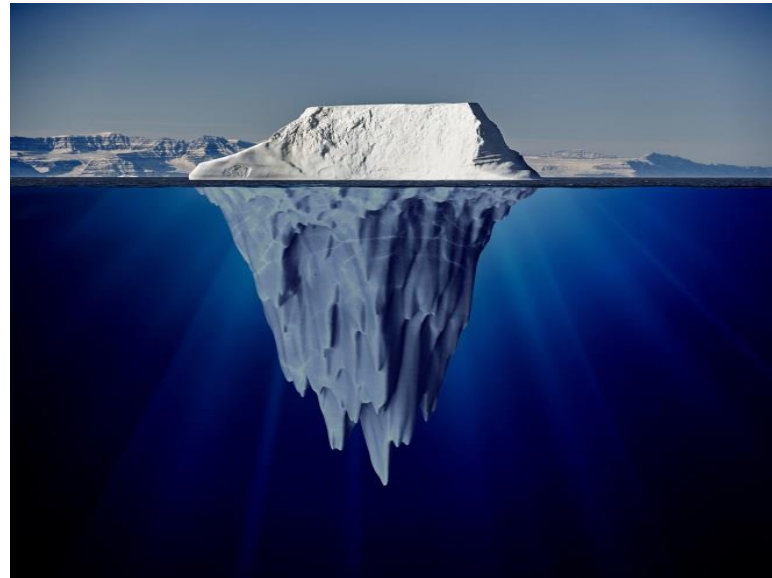
Shift

- Your success in managing conflict begins with **self-awareness and centring yourself.**



Seeking interests beneath the surface

Needs
Concerns
Values
Feelings
Beliefs
Assumptions
Intentions
Expectations
Beliefs



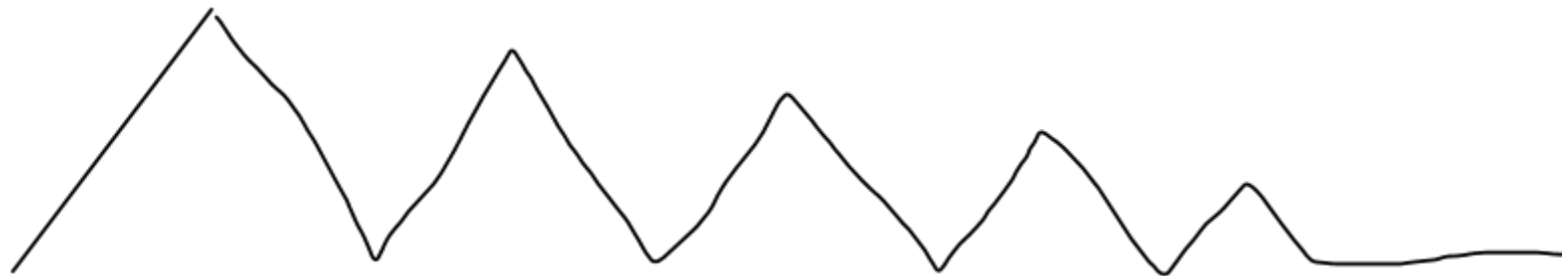
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C.L.A.I.M.: Responding to a perceived threat or angry person

- Centre yourself
- Listen for what's important to the other person
- Acknowledge what you heard
- Invite more information
- Move to problem-solving



Note: I am indebted to Toronto Neighbourhood House / St. Stephen's Conflict Resolution and Training for C.L.A.I.M.



Your Toolbox: Deep, reflective listening

1. Set the table: Encourage
2. Restate, summarize, paraphrase key points with care, curiosity and neutrality
3. Acknowledge interests and feelings
4. Ask for more info in an open-ended way



Restate what's important and acknowledge feelings and interests

A member bursts into your office and says:

“These people, these newcomers, they don't know how to look after their unit. They brought their dirty habits with them and we all have to pay for it. They leave their garbage outside of their units. And they are so disorderly. They come and go at all hours of the day or night and make noise. How can my family get any peace? And you're not doing anything about it!”



Restate what's important and acknowledge feelings and interests

- A member tackles you as you leave your office and says:
- “Hey, we didn’t approve this change in the new construction process. We were never consulted. You call this democracy?! The least you could have done was send out a survey for our opinions. We pay rent and we count, you know.”



Restate what's important and acknowledge feelings and interests

- A member approaches you and says:

“I wrote to the board about my issue and in response I got a threatening letter. I didn't do or say anything racist. I just can't put up with all the crap on my neighbour's lawn, in the backyard and so on. And now with this letter I am scared I will lose my home. And you're like the rest of them.”



Restate what's important and acknowledge feelings and interests

A member raps on your office door and angrily says:

“Why aren't you and the board managing the contractor better? I want to know! They haven't shown up again today and I have to leave for work. I'm already half an hour late.”



Shift

- Taking a few minutes to respond with reflective / active listening is the foundation for success in managing conflicts.



Sometimes you need to deliver unwelcome News

- Prepare your approach and how you will respond to anger or distress.
- Match your non-verbal communication to the tone you want to set.
- Explain the context of your message.



Delivering Unwelcome News

- Give your message clearly and succinctly and ask for a response.
- Listen actively and acknowledge impact of your message.
- Be collaborative in resolving concerns and issues arising.



Sometimes you need to make an assertive statement, an I - message

- An “I-statement” focuses on your own feelings and experiences. It does not focus on your perspective of what the other person has done or failed to do.
- I- messages allow you to get across your concerns, needs and feelings about another’s behaviour and its effect on you without accusing or blaming.
- It is clear statement that says “this is how it looks from my perspective.”



Four parts to an I – Message

- 1. “When you..... (state observation in neutral language)
- 2. “I feel or think..... (state feeling)
- 3. “because (need or value)
- 4. “I would prefer that..... (state preference).



Another pattern for an I – Message

- 1. How you feel: “I feel angry...”
- 2. What you have that feeling about: “...about the way you spoke to me...”
- 3. Why you feel this way: “because my suggestions were not considered like the others”
- 4. What you would like to see instead: “I would prefer that the pros and cons of my ideas are discussed as others’ ideas are”.



I – Messages / Assertive Statements

- Hard to hear: “You always talk and make decisions but you never ask me for my opinions”
- I – Message: “I feel that I am not asked for my opinions to the same extent others are.”



Turn these into I-messages

- “You’re freaking out and yelling about your housing charge. You can’t just barge in as if I have nothing else to do but drop everything and listen to your foul language.”
- “It’s rude of you to be late all the time. You screw up everyone’s schedule.”
- “You never listen to me and you’re not really listening now. I’m talking about the security issue from last night.”



Sometimes you need to set boundaries

- When you have tried active listening and the other's behaviour still seriously interferes with your work...
- OR
- When you are faced with offensive behaviour or you feel you are being harassed...
- You need to address the situation directly.



Setting boundaries steps

- Prepare yourself and avoid escalating the situation
- Briefly acknowledge their concerns and express willingness to help
- Use clear, firm directive statements
- Return to the person's concerns and deal with them



Setting Boundaries

- A big man comes into the office, leans over the desk and begins telling you what to do.
- A woman starts asking you about your background during a GMM when you are making a point about subsidies. She says you people should be grateful for what you have.
- A board disagrees with you about the capital budget and begins yelling at you and insisting you do not understand how things work.



Your Scenarios



Shift

- Resolving disputes is active listening and effective messaging.



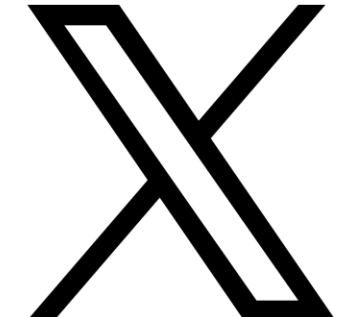
Other options for resolving disputes

- Early prevention by addressing disagreements before they become clashes
- Engage a neutral third party for:
 - - Mediation
 - - Conflict coaching
 - - Facilitating difficult meetings
- Engage a neutral third party for training in de-escalating angry people, managing conflict, intervening in conflicts, managing meetings and discussions with civility, etc.



Share what you've learned on social media!

- Post photos, favourite moments, or key learnings from today's workshops on social media
- Tag us @chfcanada
- Use the hashtag #CHFCanada2026



The National Education Committee presents

ONLINE LEARNING

Self-Paced

Move through the content when it suits you.



Courses

Fulfilling your legal duties as a board director

Taking effective meeting minutes

Chair like a champion

Personal information protection

Identity affirming language

Maintenance 101

Financial statements 101

- ✔ For board directors, co-op members, and staff
- ✔ \$30 per course
- ✔ Many courses to choose from
- ✔ 30 minutes per course
- ✔ Requires internet connection
- ✔ Develop practical skills and gain knowledge



TAKE ACTION TODAY!

Youholdthekey.ca



**YOU HOLD
THE KEY**

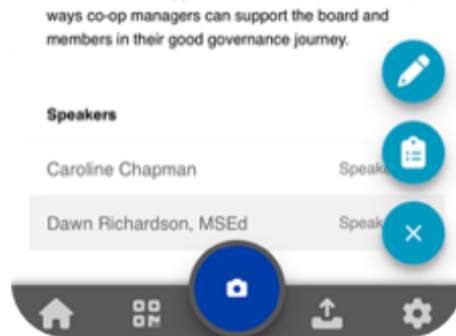
Protect affordable homes
Renew rental assistance now



Before you go

We need your help to do better!
Fill out a paper evaluation, fold in half and leave it in the room.
Or fill out a digital evaluation using our conference app.

Thanks!



When you get home

Find today's workshop materials in the resources section on our website:

chfcanada.coop/education/resources



Reminders

- **Voting in CHF Canada National Business meeting happens on Saturday.** Your co-op's delegate must be there in order to vote. The delegate can pick up a voting device at conference services.
- **All coffee breaks will be held in the tradeshow area!** Make sure you visit all the tradeshow exhibitors so that you can complete the bingo card (found in your bag) and have a chance to win prizes.

