



President's Report 2020

This has been another challenging year for the Atlantic Summer Institute on Healthy and Safe Communities as we continue to promote child and youth mental health in Atlantic Canada, in the face of scarce resources for upstream investment and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the spring of 2020, we organized a series of virtual consultations in the Atlantic region – one in each province, one Atlantic Indigenous and one Atlantic Francophone – with the support of the Mental Health Commission of Canada, to identify upstream policies and programs that promote mental health – beginning in the early years – identifying best practices, gaps and areas for potential action. Over 100 people participated in the consultations. The results were summarized and distributed to consultation participants, ASI 2020 Policy Forum participants, and the four Atlantic Premiers. The Mental Health Commission of Canada served as sponsor for all the consultations and presented on their work on the early years and mental health.

We decided that we would proceed with plans for the ASI 2020 Policy Forum on Mental Health Promotion - ***Upstream Investment in Mental Health Promotion: The Answer to the Mental Health Crisis!*** – as a virtual event, using the WHOVA conferencing platform. We attracted 129 participants! The Youth Leadership Program attracted 20 young leaders from across the region to share their experiences, expand their networks, and participate in the full ASI program. The featured speakers, panellists and workshop presenters from the Atlantic Region and across Canada took us all upstream from the mental health crisis to the origins of good mental health for infants, children and youth. The program was designed to develop a policy brief to be presented to the Atlantic Premiers in the fall of 2020. A working group is following up from the forum and will produce a draft brief by the end of the year.

Our keynote speaker, Trish Hennessy, Director, Think Upstream, a project of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, delivered a powerful address - “From ‘me’ to ‘we’: a collectivist vision for an upstream mental health approach”. The opening plenary, Let’s Talk Policy, featured a conversation with Elder Albert Marshall from Eskasoni First Nation who spoke about two-eyed seeing that integrates traditional ways of knowing with science-based knowledge. The Opening Panel provided evidence for upstream policies that promote mental health. Dr. Jean Clinton, Clinical Professor McMaster University, Karen Bierman, Evan Pugh University Professor; Director, Child Study Center, Pennsylvania State University, and Marie-Claude Roberge, Scientific Advisor, Mental Health Promotion, Institut national de santé publique du Québec, spoke about infant, childhood and youth mental health promotion. Eight concurrent workshops were offered to provide skill development for participants.

This year’s program was supported by the Government of Quebec through its Secrétariat du Québec aux relations canadiennes, which allowed us to feature speakers from Quebec to inform us about the work they are doing. The program was also supported by Medavie Blue Cross Foundation as Presenting Sponsor, TD Canada

Trust as the Title Sponsor for the Youth Leadership Program, Bell Let's Talk and the City of Charlottetown as Bronze Sponsors, Mental Health Commission of Canada, A Way Home Canada, Atlantic Council for International Cooperation, the Governments of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

I would like to extend a big thank you, on behalf of the ASI Board of Directors, to all of the volunteers who participated on the Program Design and Program Planning committees to make the event such a success. I would also like to thank our board members and participants who volunteered to take on roles such as moderators and facilitators in all aspects of the program.

I want to express my greatest appreciation to Patsy Beattie-Huggan and Kirsten McKnight at The Quaich for all their support, ideas, and hard work. We couldn't do what we do without them. We said good-bye to Kirsten this fall when she left ASI to take on a new position close to her home in Fredericton. She has provided many years of support to our communications, coordination, and the Atlantic Showcase. We enjoyed the support of three students who worked virtually from their homes – Chantal Peng as Youth Program Coordinator (Acadia University, Wolfville, NS), Julia Abundo as Communications and Fund Development Assistant (Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's NL), and Claire Chilton an intern at The Quaich (Queens University, Kingston, ON). We also enjoyed the support of Anne Götz, an international intern currently in the final year of her bachelor of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Furtwangen, Germany. As part of a university cooperation, she studied at the University of Prince Edward Island as an exchange student. Anne's work focused on the marketing and planning of the Atlantic Summer Institute with a focus on the Youth Leadership Program.

I want to thank our board members - Patsy Beattie-Huggan, Derrick Biso, Robert Cahill, Rebecca Ferguson, Susan Hartley, Emily Laite, Cathy Leslie, Erika Michaud, and Eva Sock - for their commitment, energy and engagement in 2020. We will be saying good-bye to Derrick, Rebecca and Emily, and thank them for their efforts on behalf of ASI during their tenure on the board. We welcome new board members: Karen Clarke, St. John's, NL, Linda Liebenberg, Waverley, NS, Arianne Melara, Fredericton, NB and Chantal Peng, Wolfville, NS. I am excited about the breadth and diversity of knowledge and experience that our new board members will bring to the ASI Board. I am optimistic that we will continue to evolve as a dynamic and innovative organization that acts as a catalyst for social change in the Atlantic Region.

Respectfully submitted,

Malcolm Shookner
President
Halifax, NS